



Read & Write GOLD

By Andrew Leib

Read & Write GOLD (R&WG) from Texthelp Systems is literacy software: a collection of assistive technologies, writing tools, and links to online resources that make reading, writing, and organizing research more efficient -- especially for students with print disabilities.

The application enables users to:

- Convert digital text files into accessible formats
- Listen to books using the built-in screen reader
- Use spell check and word prediction to edit text and build vocabulary
- Highlight facts for research in e-books and web content
- Collect and organize facts in a Word document including an auto-formatted bibliography.

None of the technologies in Read & Write GOLD is new, but the program's ability to pack so many solutions into one tool bar accessible from any open document, web page, or program makes it one of the most versatile assistive technology products available.

A Customizable Tool Bar

The Read & Write GOLD tool bar sits atop all open applications, eliminating the jumping back and forth common to many accessibility programs. You can customize the tool bar to display the features you use most.

Read & Write GOLD provides tools in three main areas:

1. Reading and reading support
2. Writing and self-editing
3. Research and study skills

Two main tools are available within all features: text-to-speech and highlighting. These are incredibly useful for all students, but most especially those with a learning disability, print disability, or executive functioning challenges.

- **Text-to-Speech:** R&WG can read all digitized text aloud, including web content, Word, and PDF files, in natural-sounding synthetic voices. Listening to the words one writes can make errors easier to spot. Simple controls (e.g., Play, Pause, and Rewind buttons) make speech output easy to use.
- **Highlighting:** R&WG's dual-color highlighting of sentences and words as they're read aloud enables students to follow along with the text, bolstering comprehension, decoding, fluency, and retention of information. Highlighting (R&WG provides four different colors) is also how users save and collect written passages as facts for assignments and research papers. Easy exporting to a Word document provides an excellent visual template to study from or compose a paper.

Following is a brief overview of Read & Write GOLD tools for reading, writing, and research. Each feature has an accompanying video tutorial accessible from the toolbar. This allows users to view, pause, and try it themselves.

Reading Aids

Screen Reading & Text Conversion: R&WG supports most file formats, including: Microsoft Word, web content, PDFs (via PDF Aloud); DAISY 3 audiobooks (via DAISY Reader); and any text embedded in graphics or videos (via Screenshot Reader). Users can select reading voice, speed, and pitch and can choose to hear text read one word, sentence, or paragraph at a time.

Users can also convert files into an accessible format. For example, you can scan a Word document, hear it read aloud, and save it (via Speech Maker) as an MP3 or AIFF sound file. You can store files on iTunes for later access from a computer or mobile device.

Bookshare Link & NIMAS Conversion: Members can hit the "Go To Bookshare" where they can search for and download DAISY audiobooks and listen to them using a screen reader. Read & Write Gold can be utilized to read aloud any books downloaded from Bookshare, as well as the use of all other features for studying. R&WG can also convert NIMAS books -- an XML-based format publishers use to code accessible textbooks -- into a Word, DAISY, or PDF file.

Screen Masking: This feature enables you to put a spotlight on where you're currently reading or writing on a page. It's designed to help readers maintain focus and reduce eyestrain. You can tint everything onscreen except the line you're typing on or where the mouse pointer is. You can spotlight a single line, paragraph, or window, and adjust text and highlight colors to enhance contrast. This is also helpful for students who need assistance with tracking.

Vocabulary Builder: You can highlight words in any document or web page to build a vocabulary list in the form of a Microsoft Word table that includes words, definitions, and representative images.

Translator: This program translates English words into Spanish, French, German, and other languages with one mouse click. It works with any digital and online content as well as accessible applications and textbooks. This is an excellent feature for ELL students or those learning a new language.

Writing Aids

Read & Write GOLD provides many functions to make it easier to put thoughts on paper and help ensure one's writing is free of spelling and grammatical errors.

Word Prediction: As you type, R&WG displays word options in the Prediction panel. The feature helps improve accuracy, reduce keystrokes, and build vocabulary. It tracks a writer's style and predicts both the word being typed and the following word. Phonetic mapping is provided to help users find the right word. Version 10 contains over one million common English phrases in 100 subject-specific prediction word banks.

Speech Input: This voice recognition function, which includes a voice training and setup program, enables users to dictate documents using a microphone – ideal for persons with mobility issues or who prefer dictation to typing.

Speak-as-I-Type: This feature enables students to hear their words read aloud as they type, which helps them recognize and correct errors on the spot. Users can also turn it off and listen to text one sentence, paragraph, or page at a time for editing papers.

Word Wizard: This tool helps students find the right word by providing new and alternative word lists through searches on phrases relating to a concept. For example, the search results for “bicycle” might include “parts of a bicycle” which might yield the sought-after word, “crossbar.”

Spelling & Verb Checkers: The Phonetic Spell Check recognizes virtually every type of spelling error and provides suggested corrections and definitions. You can also personalize spelling dictionaries to include new words; e.g., “Devyn” for “Devon.” The “Sounds Like” checker picks up homophones and commonly misused words. Verb Checker determines the correct verb tense, providing multiple conjugation options.

Dictionaries: R&WG provides an 180,000-word talking dictionary for definitions and alternatives for selected words, along with parts of speech and sample sentences to increase understanding. Just highlight a word and click the Dictionary icon. A Picture Dictionary displays a visual image of a word to illustrate its meaning and enables users to place images within documents – a helpful feature for students new to English or who require augmentative and alternative communication. Web definitions offers instant access to the dictionary and a thesaurus online.

Research & Study Tools

Read & Write GOLD study tools enable students to highlight and extract text from any documents or websites to create study guides, outlines, or answer sheets; or to complete assignments.

Study Skills Highlighters: Users can highlight text on any web page or document in four colors: yellow, blue, green, and pink. They can then gather and export all highlights into a Word document. For each highlight, the program automatically generates a formatted bibliographic entry.

Fact Finder: Fact Finder enables you to research topics, collect facts from over 20 information websites, and retrieve them in one step. R&WG displays search results for each term and is a quick and easy tool to help write papers and reports.

Fact Folder: The Fact Folder enables you to collate facts – both text and images – from multiple sources, add dates as well as author and category names, and automatically generate a formatted bibliography.

Fact Mapper: Fact Mapper enables you to brainstorm and build visual mind maps, adding elements, sticky notes, and images, that you can export into a Microsoft Word outline – a great tool for visual learners and for organizing ideas prior to writing. It's great to print out a Fact Mapper document before writing, as it provides a visual outline to work from prior to writing a paper, or a visual map of steps needed to solve math problems. You can use custom images to make points easier to remember.

Calculators: You can access a simple or scientific talking calculator to solve math problems, make conversions, or calculate equations within a document. An audit trail tracks your work. Read & Write GOLD also supports Design Science's MathPlayer and MathType for creating MathML files.

The real power of Read & Write GOLD is how it motivates students and builds confidence and self-esteem by making expression more efficient and less daunting for those who struggle with writing.

R&WG runs on both Windows computers and the Mac. Texthelp also has a suite of web-based apps for mobile devices such as the iPad, iPhone, and Android.

Single, concurrent, and site licenses are available. Pricing starts at \$645. For more information, call Texthelp Systems at 888.248.0652. You can also download a free 30-day trial on Texthelp's website.

Resources:

Product Information

Read & Write GOLD Product Page & Download

<http://www.texthelp.com/north-america/our-products/readwrite>

Read & Write GOLD for Mac Introductory Video

http://www.texthelp.com/readwrite/videotours/mac5/marketing/intro/intro_stream_us.html

Read & Write GOLD Features for PC Users

<http://www.texthelp.com/North-America/Our-products/Readwrite/features-pc>

Further Reading

Read & Write GOLD Designed to Improve Writing Skills & Reading Comprehension

<http://assistivetechology.about.com/od/TechnologyforReadingWriting/a/Readandwrite-Gold-Designed-To-Improve-Writing-Skills-And-Reading-Comprehension.htm>

Texthelp Software Helps Print Disabled Students Read & Write with Confidence

<http://assistivetechology.about.com/od/TechnologyforReadingWriting/p/Texthelp-Software-Helps-Print-Disabled-Students-Read-And-Write-With-Confidence.htm>

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