
Fedora 12

Accessibility Guide

Using Fedora with a visual, hearing, or mobility impairment



Fedora Documentation Project

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Abstract

This document describes some of the hardware devices, applications and utilities available to assist people with disabilities to use a computer with the Fedora operating system.

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1. Introduction

There are approximately 500 million people worldwide with some kind of visual, hearing, or mobility impairment. Currently there are over 54 million people with disabilities in the United States alone and that number is significantly increasing as the baby boomer generation continues to age. People with disabilities often find it extremely difficult to effectively use existing and emerging technologies which are often designed without regard to their needs. Websites with inaccessible content can also be problematic for screen readers and other specialized devices used by the disabled community.

Accessible features have been voluntarily integrated into operating systems, web interfaces and other technologies because of marketing potential or because it has been "the right thing to do." Equal access to educational, professional and recreational technologies is rapidly becoming a legal requirement. Federal agencies in numerous countries are formulating accessibility standards. Federal requirements in the United States went into effect in June 2001.

Specialized hardware devices, applications and utilities are available which considerably increase the usability of Linux for individuals with special needs.

2. Why should people choose Fedora as an accessibility solution?

Linux offers an inexpensive and efficient solution for the disabled community. Open source software costs far less compared to tools that run on other operating systems and Linux tools are often freely downloadable.

While the *Graphical User Interface* (GUI) is convenient for sighted users, it is often inhibiting to those with visual impairments because of the difficulty speech synthesizers have interpreting graphics.

Linux is a great operating system for users with visual limitations because the GUI is an option, not a requirement. Most modern tools including email, news, web browsers, calendars, calculators and much more can run on Linux without the GUI. The working environment can also be customized to meet the hardware or software needs of the user.

Fedora is an extremely popular Linux distribution. Most industry professionals are familiar with Fedora, making it relatively straightforward to find assistance if necessary.

The Fedora Project issues regular and frequent updates and enhancements, and computers that have Fedora installed can download and install these automatically and without cost. It is therefore easy and economical to keep computers secure and up to date.

2.1. The Section 508 Mandate

In the United States, the Section 508 Mandate is an addendum to the *Rehabilitation Act* made in 1998 that requires federal agencies to use accessible electronic and information technologies so that people with special needs have the same opportunities as everyone else.

For detailed information about the requirements of the Section 508 Mandate, visit <http://www.section508.gov/>

2.2. The Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT)

The VPAT template details how a particular product or service conforms to Section 508 criteria. The VPAT helps federal personnel adhere to Section 508 by helping them determine whether they are buying the most accessible IT products and services available. The VPAT template participation by private vendors is voluntary. These templates are hosted on the individual vendor websites. The vendors maintain their own information and the government does not endorse this information in any way.

3. Available open source tools, utilities and drivers

Current development is focusing on visual and mobility impairments. There are both software and hardware based solutions available. There are also both console and graphic solutions available, however, the graphic solutions are limited at this time.

3.1. Hardware

The biggest advantage of the hardware speech solutions is that speech is available before the operating system loads, which even makes it possible for people with a visually impairment to install the operating system. Hardware solutions include speech synthesizers, braille terminals, braille printers, sip and puff systems, and eye gaze pointing devices. These devices are usually very expensive and it is difficult to find drivers for them. Drivers are being written (mostly for speech synthesizers) for Linux but they need to be tested and integrated by the community into "upstream" software projects before becoming part of Fedora.

Jim Van Zandt has also written several servers that work with **Emacspeak**. These servers can be found in a package called *Emacspeak-ss* on Jim Van Zandt's website or linked within the *Emacspeak HOWTO*, available at: <http://slackware.osuosl.org/slackware-3.3/docs/Emacspeak-HOWTO>.

For more information on **Emacspeak**, visit <http://emacspeak.sourceforge.net/>

3.2. Software

This document focuses mostly on software tools and utilities that work with Linux. Most of these tools have been developed by the Open Source community and many have not yet been tested by the Fedora Project.

4. Screen Readers

Screen readers are an important accessibility tool that allows a person with limited vision to have the computer read what is on the screen. There are numerous solutions that provide this service. This section covers some of the ones available to Fedora users.

4.1. Orca for GNOME

GNOME supplies its own screen reader *Orca*. This package is installed by default on all Fedora systems. Additional information on *Orca* may be found by visiting <http://live.gnome.org/Orca/>.

4.2. Speakup

Speakup is a screen review package written by Kirk Reiser and Andy Berdan and available under a free license. **Speakup** gives users with visual or mobility impairments the ability to have audible console feedback using a speech synthesizer. **Speakup** is useful to blind users because it provides an audible installation and is fully supported by the blind open source community.

Speakup works with the following hardware synthesizers:

- **DoubleTalk PC** and **DoubleTalk LT**
- **LiteTalk**
- **Accent PC** and **Accent SA**
- **Speakout**
- **Artic Transport**
- **Audapter**
- **Braille 'N Speak** and **Type 'N Speak**
- **Dectalk External** and **Dectalk Express**
- **Apollo2**

For more information about Speakup, or to contribute to the Speakup project visit: <http://www.linux-speakup.org>

4.3. Using Emacspeak with Fedora

Emacspeak is a speech interface that allows visually impaired users to interact independently and efficiently with the computer. **Emacspeak** has dramatically changed how hundreds of blind and visually impaired users around the world interact with the personal computer and the Internet. A rich suite of task-oriented speech-enabled tools provides efficient speech-enabled access to the evolving semantic world wide web. When combined with Linux running on low-cost PC hardware, **Emacspeak**

provides a reliable, stable speech-friendly solution that opens up the Internet to visually impaired users around the world.

Before using **Emacspeak**, you should familiarize yourself with some documentation. Start with *A Gentle Introduction to Emacspeak* by Gary Lawrence Murphy, which is available online at <http://tldp.org/LDP/espk-ug/html/index.html>

The *Emacspeak HOWTO* written by Jim Van Zandt is also a very good resource, although the document is limited to the Slackware distribution. The Emacspeak HOWTO is available online at: <http://slackware.osuosl.org/slackware-3.3/docs/Emacspeak-HOWTO>

The following sections describe how to perform various tasks using **Emacspeak** and Fedora.



The Meta key

At various points, the following sections refer to the **Meta** key. This key is fundamental to **Emacs** (and therefore **Emacspeak**) commands, but is very seldom found on modern keyboards. Most keyboard layouts map the **Alt** key to take the place of **Meta**.

4.3.1. Reading news using Fedora and Emacspeak

Gnus is the news reader included with **Emacspeak**. **Gnus** gets the appropriate data from the `.newsrc` file in the user's home directory. To post and read news through **Emacspeak**, refer to <http://www.gnus.org/> for manuals, tutorials, HOWTOs, and more. To start **Gnus**, press **Meta+X**, then type **gnus** and press **Enter**.

This command displays all the newsgroups you are subscribed to. To select a newsgroup, highlight your selection and press the space bar. Next, specify how many articles you would like to open: type a number and press **Enter**. This splits the screen into two buffers. The top section is the summary buffer, the bottom section is the article buffer. You should now be able to read your news.

4.3.2. Sending and reading email using Fedora and Emacspeak

There are several email clients available in **Emacspeak**. The **Gnus** utility can actually be used for both email and news. Press **Meta+X** to start **Gnus**, then press **M** to use the mail client.

The easiest tool to use is **RMAIL**. To send a message using **RMAIL**, Press **Ctrl+X**, followed by **M**

Fill in the **To:** and **Subject:** fields. Put the body of the message below the line that reads **-text follows this line-**. To send the message when you are finished, press **Ctrl+C** twice in succession.

To read a message using **RMAIL**, press **Meta+X**, then type **rmail** and press **Enter**.

For more information on using **RMAIL** visit http://www.gnu.org/software/emacs/manual/html_node/emacs/Rmail.html

4.3.3. Using Emacspeak to execute Linux shell commands

It is not necessary to leave **Emacspeak** to execute a Linux command. To execute a command within **Emacspeak**, press **Esc**, then type **!** followed by the name of the command when **Emacspeak** prompts you. To exit the command output window, press **Ctrl+X**, followed by **1**

This functionality is extremely useful. You can even print and compile files you are working on within **Emacspeak**. For more information on Linux shell commands refer to *Josh's Linux Guide* or any other comparable command resource.

Josh's Linux Guide is available from <http://linuxguide.sourceforge.net/linux-commands.html>

5. Screen Magnifiers

Screen magnifiers are just what they sound like, programs that considerably magnify portions of the computer screen so it can be more easily read.

5.1. KMagnifier

In KDE, KMagnifier, or KMag, magnifies the area around the cursor or a user-defined area. You can also save a magnified portion of the screen to disk. Additional information can be found at <http://kmag.sourceforge.net/>

5.1.1. Installing KMagnifier

In Fedora, KMagnifier is packaged in the *kdeaccessibility* package. This package also contains kmouse tool, kmouth, and ktts, all of which are discussed in other areas of this guide. To install *kdeaccessibility* you can either select **System > Administration > Add/Remove Software** and then type in *kdeaccessibility* in the screen that pops up or in a terminal window type `su -c "yum install kdeaccessibility"`.

6. Mouse tools

With so many tools available to Fedora users there were some that could not be placed in a specific category but needed to be listed as they would sure be useful!

6.1. KMouseTool

A program for KDE, **KMouseTool** provides an alternate method for clicking the mouse by clicking the mouse whenever the cursor pauses and even provides a dragging capability. **KMouseTool** works with any mouse or pointing device.

6.1.1. Installing KMouseTool

In Fedora, **KMouseTool** is packaged in the *kdeaccessibility* package. This package also contains kmagnifier, kmouth, and ktts, all of which are discussed in other areas of this guide. To install *kdeaccessibility* you can either select **System > Administration > Add/Remove Software** and then type in *kdeaccessibility* in the screen that pops up or in a terminal window type `su -c "yum install kdeaccessibility"`.

6.2. Mousetweaks

Similar to KDE's **KMouseTool**, GNOME's **Mousetweaks** provides the ability to doubleclick, dwell clicks, and pointer capture. Additional information on **Mousetweaks** can be found at <http://library.gnome.org/users/mousetweaks/>

6.2.1. Installing Mousetweaks

In Fedora, **Mousetweaks** is packaged and can be installed by selecting **System > Administration > Add/Remove Software** and then type in *Mousetweaks*.

7. Other tools

With so many tools available to Fedora users there are some that can not be placed in a specific category but need to be listed as they are sure be useful!

7.1. Using BRLTTY with Fedora

BRLTTY provides access to the Linux command line for blind people using refreshable braille displays. This tool provides complete screen review functionality and minimal speech capability. **BRLTTY** is available in Fedora repositories in RPM format. For information and documentation on **BRLTTY**, visit <http://mielke.cc/brlTTY/>

7.2. KMouth

Let your computer do the talking using **KMouth**! You can setup phrases you would like to say and your computer will speak them for you. You can even use your own phrasebooks. Visit <http://www.schmidt.de/kmouth/index.en.html> for additional information on **KMouth**.

7.2.1. Installing KMouth

In Fedora, **KMouth** is packaged in the *kdeaccessibility* package. This package also contains *kmagnifier*, *kmousetool*, and *ktts*, all of which are discussed in other areas of this guide. To install *kdeaccessibility* you can either select **System > Administration > Add/Remove Software** and then type in *kdeaccessibility* in the screen that pops up or in a terminal window type `su -c "yum install kdeaccessibility"`.

7.3. On-Screen Keyboards

7.3.1. Dasher

Dasher is an information-efficient text-entry interface, driven by natural continuous pointing gestures. **Dasher** makes data entry easy by people utilizing a joystick, touchscreen, trackball, or mouse for one-handed operations. It can also be utilized by people using no-hand tools such as a head-mouse or an eyetracker. Additional information on **Dasher** can be found at <http://library.gnome.org/users/dasher/>.

7.3.1.1. Installing Dasher

In Fedora, *Dasher* can be easily installed by either selecting **System > Administration > Add/Remove Software** and then type in *dasher* in the screen that pops up or in a terminal window type `su -c "yum install dasher"`.

7.3.2. Caribou

Gnome's **Caribou** is an on-screen keyboard that is still in development. An alternative to the **Gnome On-Screen Keyboard**, **Caribou** is still a few months away from being available as a stable release. Additional information can be located at <http://live.gnome.org/Caribou>.

8. Help for Linux Desktops

Certain desktops have their own internal settings that can help with accessibility.

8.1. KDE

In KDE, keyboard and mouse settings can be configured in kcontrol. These settings are available by selecting **Personalization > Accessibility**. Additional information on Accessibility Tools in KDE can be found at <http://accessibility.kde.org/>

8.2. GNOME

In GNOME, accessibility controls can be configured by selecting **System > Preferences > Assistive Technologies**. Additional information on GNOME's accessibility tools can be found at <http://library.gnome.org/users/gnome-access-guide/>

9. Finding more information on Linux accessibility

The following documents offer helpful suggestions for making Linux more accessible:

- *Linux Accessibility HOWTO*: <http://tldp.org/HOWTO/Accessibility-HOWTO/>
- *Keyboard-and-Console-HOWTO*: <http://www.tldp.org/HOWTO/Keyboard-and-Console-HOWTO.html>

Additional links that might be helpful include:

- The Speakup Project: <http://www.linux-speakup.org/>
- Trace Center: <http://trace.wisc.edu/>
- Blinux: <http://leb.net/blinux/>

10. We Need Feedback!

If you find a typographical error in this manual, or if you have thought of a way to make this manual better, we would love to hear from you! Please submit a report in Bugzilla: <http://bugzilla.redhat.com/bugzilla/> against the product **Fedora Documentation**.

When submitting a bug report, be sure to mention the manual's identifier: *accessibility-guide*

If you have a suggestion for improving the documentation, try to be as specific as possible when describing it. If you have found an error, please include the section number and some of the surrounding text so we can find it easily.

A. Revision History

Revision 0.9-1 Sun Nov 22 2009

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Added Gnome features Dasher and Caribou.

Commented out dated information on how Red Hat and Fedora had or had not tested some of the FOSS solutions.

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Modified the "screen readers" section.
Removed link to KMouseTools and it was broken.

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Susan Lauber
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Various style edits (tense, spelling, etc.)
Added markup for menuitems

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Eric Christensen
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Created "Mouse Tools" section, moved KMouseTools to that section, and added Mousetweaks.
Added GNOME information in the "Desktops" section.
Added comments to Tools.xml for further editing.

Revision 0.5-1 Wed Nov 07 2009

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Created "Other Tools" section and added BRLTTY, KMouth, and KMouseTool to that section.
Created "Screen Magnifiers" section and added KMagnifier.
Created "Desktops" section and added KDE. This section will include specific Desktop accessibility controls.

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Combined Speakup and Emacspeak into the Screen Readers section.

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Extra XML markup.

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Eric Christensen
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Updated links and added information on Emacspeak.

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Eric Christensen
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Publicanized all information in the Accessibility Guide

