How To Make Your Computer Read Documents to You

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10:03 AM

Since the beginning of the computer age, people were trying to make their computers talk to them. These days, that functional ity is built right into Windows and can easily be activated to read documents back to you.

Using the text to speech functionality of your computer can save you a lot of time if you need to study for tests, read books , review reports, or if you are just too busy to sit down and read something. While the voice may sound computer generated, there is a lways the option of downloading new SAPI compatible voice profiles from various sites on the Internet, though most of them aren't f ree.
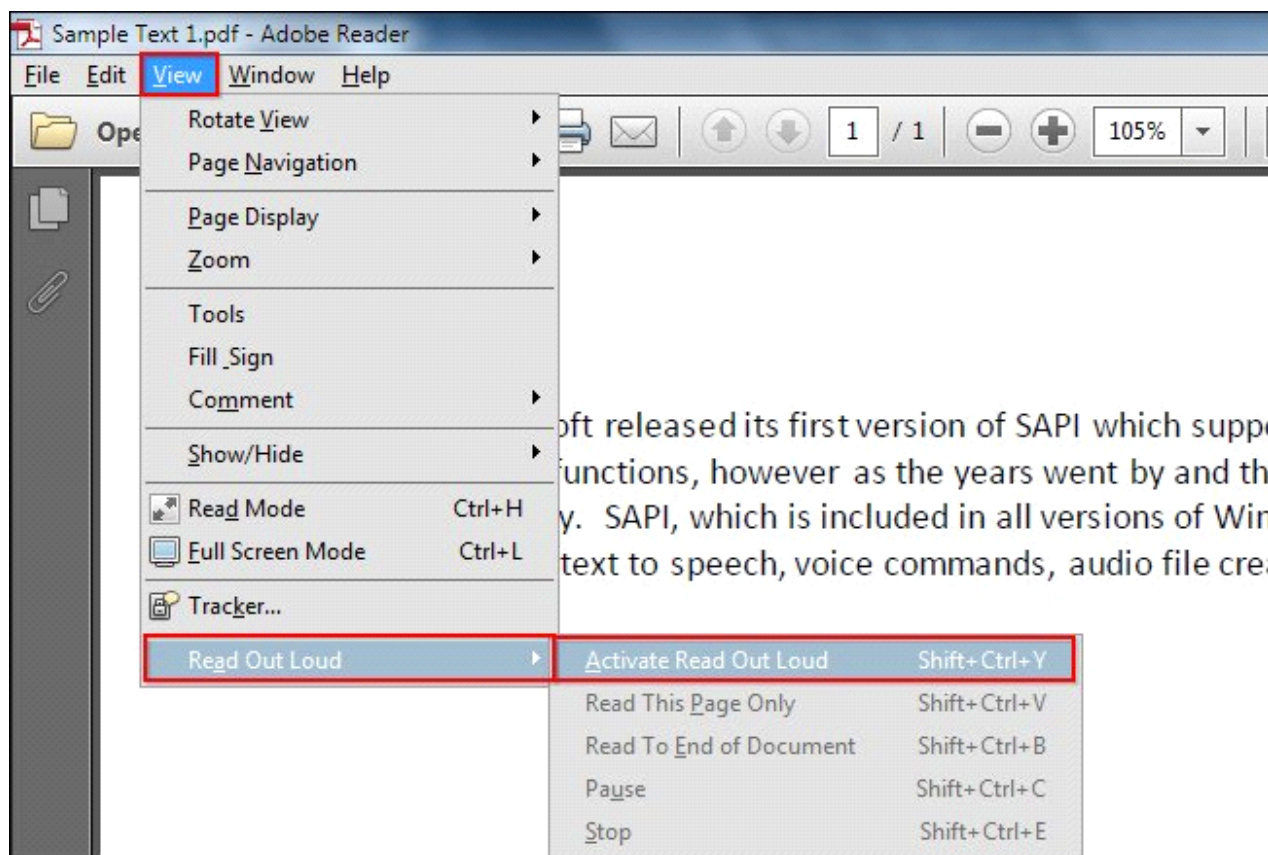
Most Microsoft computers are equipped with at least two American English voices (one male, one female). Many computers also offer a variety of voices that are fluent in different languages. By accessing the settings through your control panel, which we wi ll discuss later on, you can adjust the pitch, speed, and volume of your computer's SAPI voice.

Today we will discuss how you can make your computer interpret documents and speak their contents to you. You can use two ver y common applications that most Windows users make use of; namely, Adobe Reader and Microsoft Word.

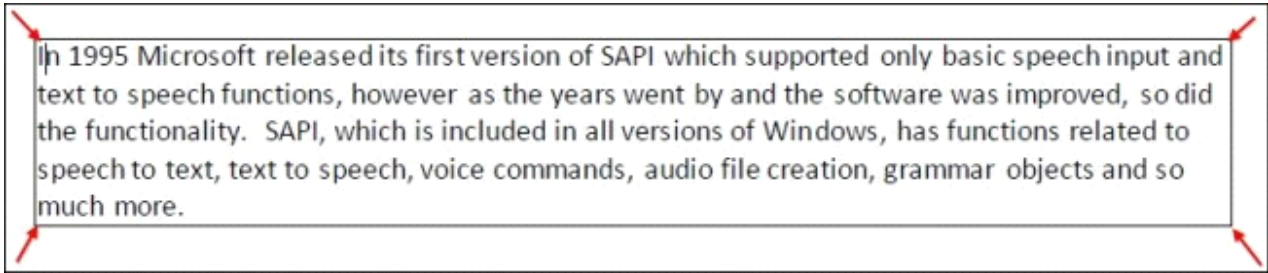Use Adobe Reader to Read PDF Documents to You

Note: Adobe Reader's own settings menu no longer has any option for disabling its browser integration, so you'll need to disable th e Adobe Reader plugin in the browsers you use. Follow these steps for disabling plug-ins in your web browser of choice, disabling the "Adobe Acrobat" plug-in.

Once you've installed the application, and follow the installation process to completion and then open up a PDF file that you'd like the computer to read to you. Once it is open click on the "View" drop down menu, move your mouse over the "Read Out Loud" option then click on "Activate Read Out Loud."
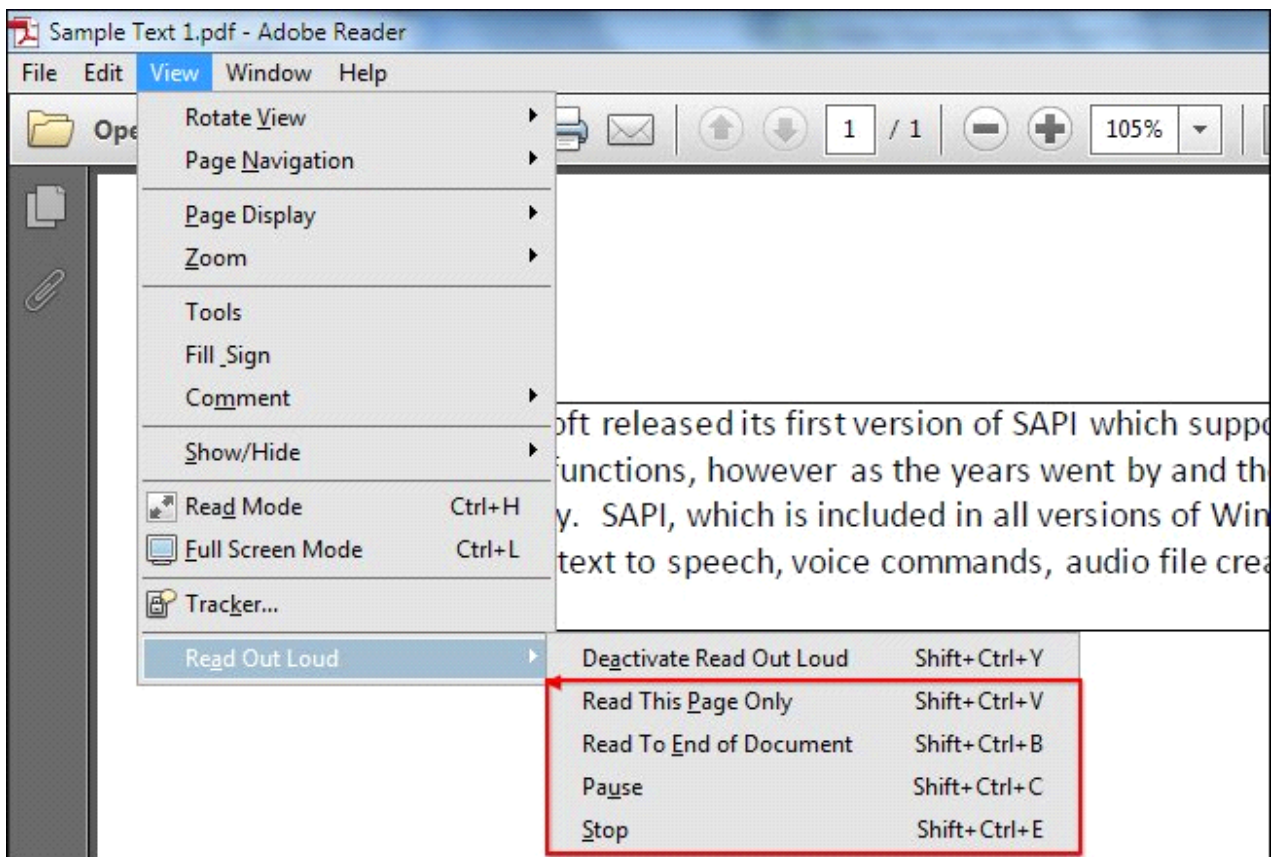

Alternatively, you can click "Ctrl," "Shift," and "Y" (Ctrl+Shift+Y) on your keyboard to activate the feature. Once the featu re is

activated, you can click on a single paragraph to make windows read it back to you.
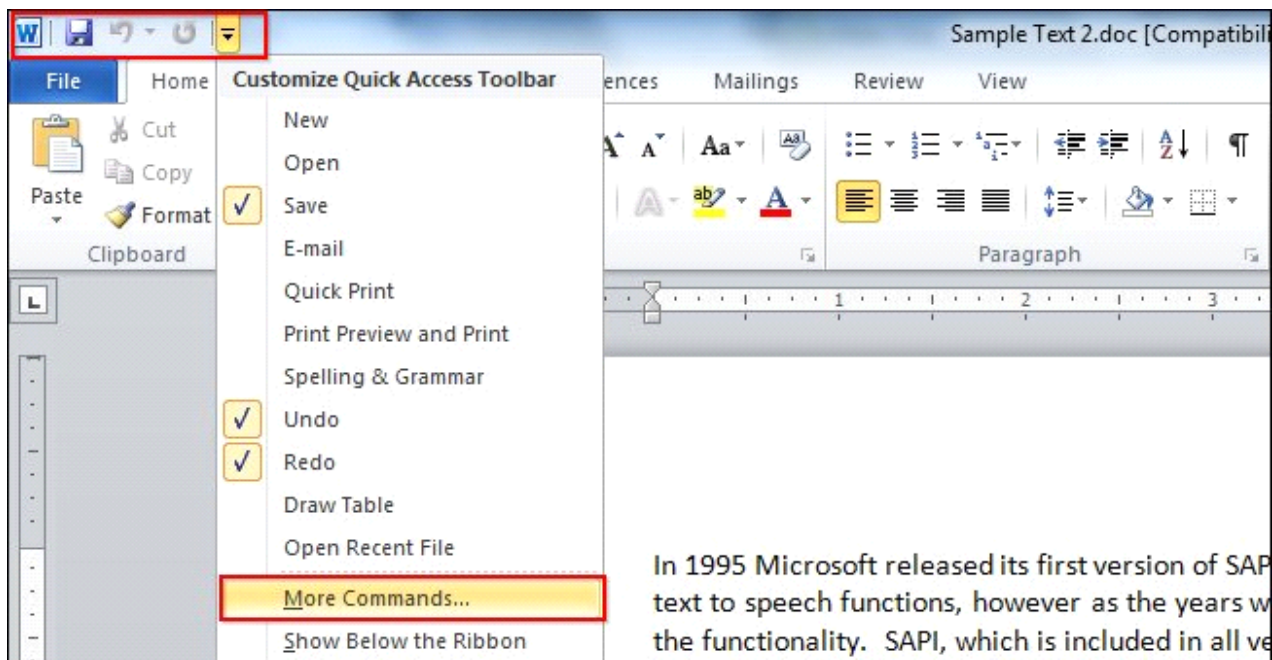
In 1995 Microsoft released its first version of SAPI which supported only basic speech input and text to speech functions, however as the years went by and the software was improved, so did the functionality. SAPI, which is included in all versions of Windows, has functions related to speech to text, text to speech, voice commands, audio file creation, grammar objects and so much more.

Another option would be to navigate to the "View" menu, then "Read Out Loud" and select an option that fits your needs as sho wn in the Image below. You can make Adobe Reader read a "Single Page" or the "Entire Document." During the reading you can also "Pause" it or "Stop" it at any time.
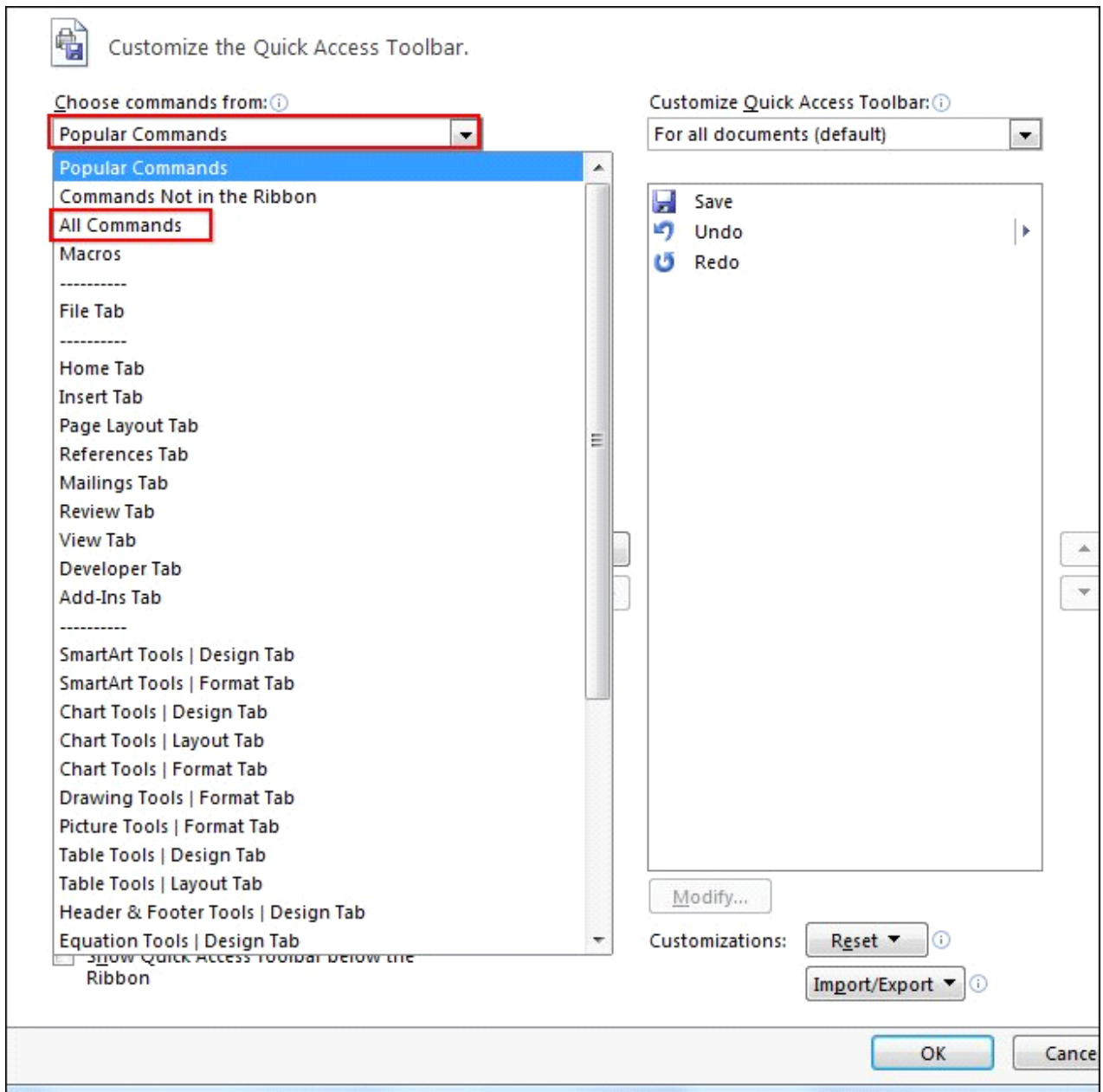

Text to Speech with Microsoft Word

If you don't use Adobe Reader or PDF files and have .doc, .docx, or .txt files that you want your computer to read to you ins tead, it is possible using Microsoft Word instead.
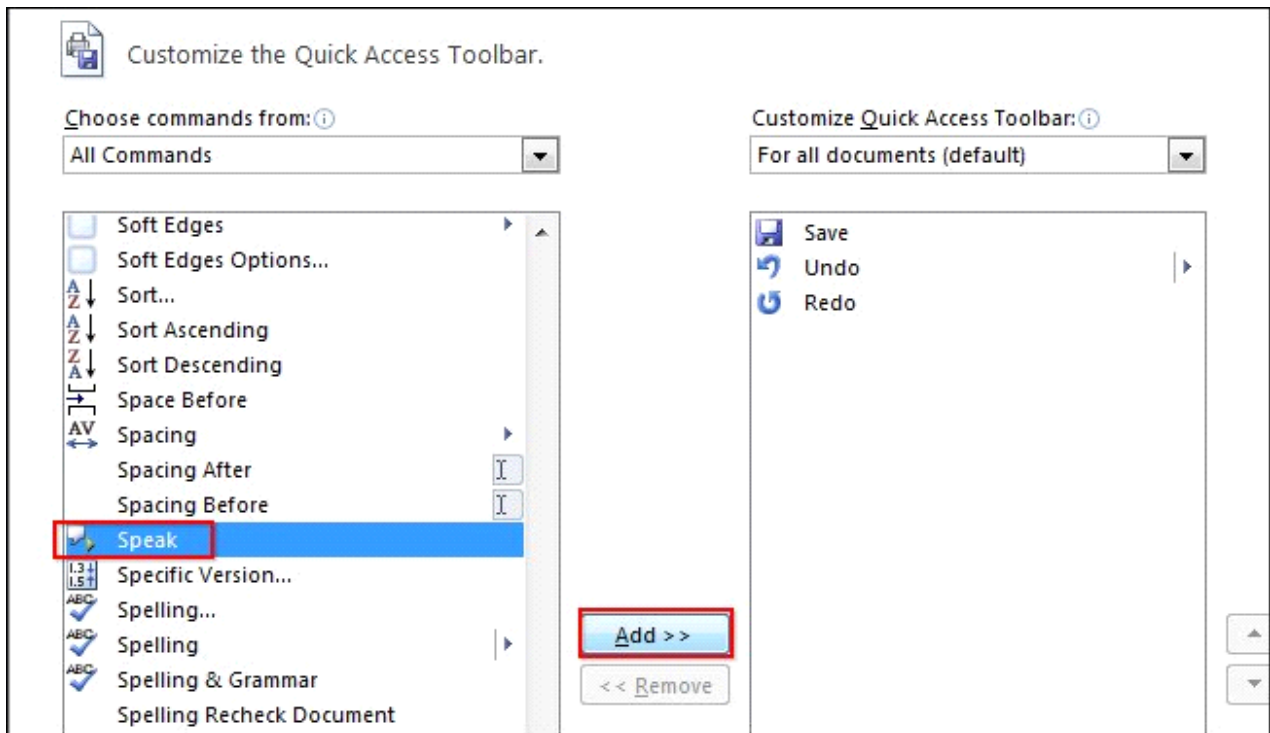
Once you have opened the file in Microsoft Word, you are ready to make your computer read to you. Start by clicking on the sm all arrow located in the "Quick Access Toolbar" and finding the "More Commands…" option.
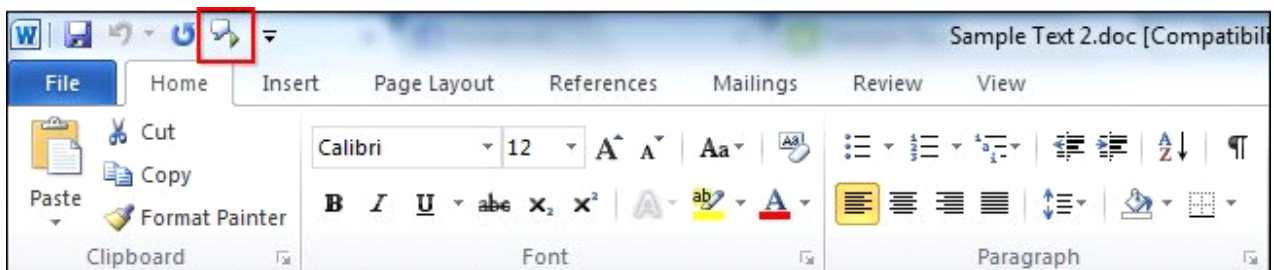
After you have opened the "Word Options" dialog box, click on the drop down menu that says "Popular Commands" and switch it t o "All Commands."
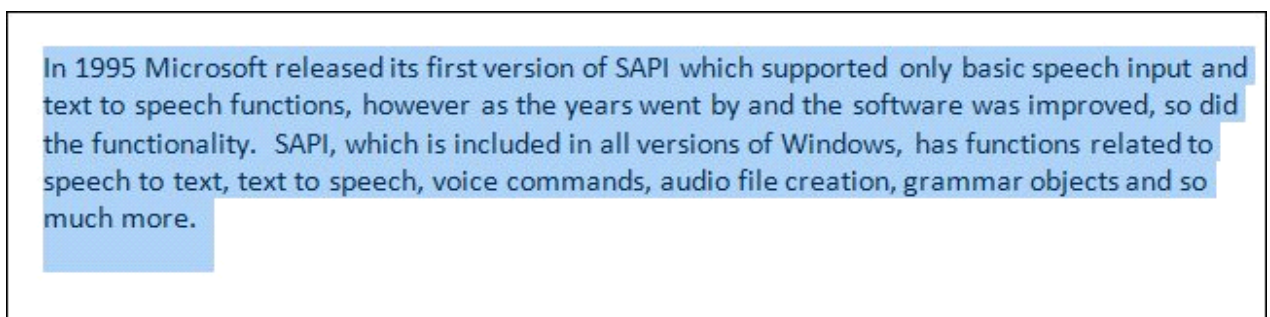
The next step is to scroll down till you find a command called "Speak" then click on it once to highlight it and press the "A dd>>" button on the right.

If you look at the "Quick Access Toolbar" you will notice that there is a small "message box" with a gray arrow.
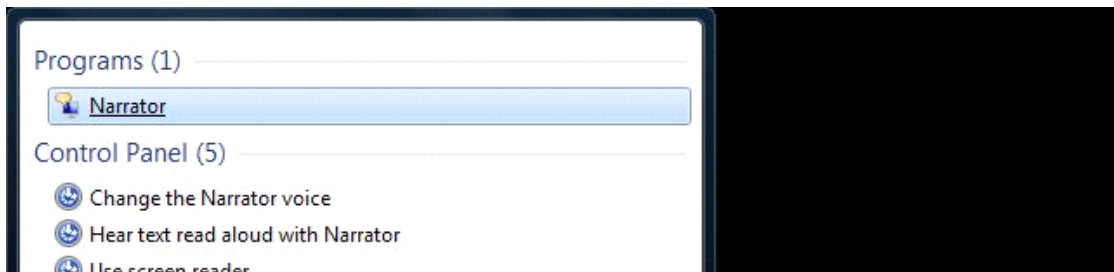

The next step will be to highlight a few words or a paragraph of the document by clicking and holding your mouse button while dragging it over the words you want to hear. Alternatively, if you want to highlight the entire document, simply press "Contr ol" and "A" at the same time (Ctrl+A).

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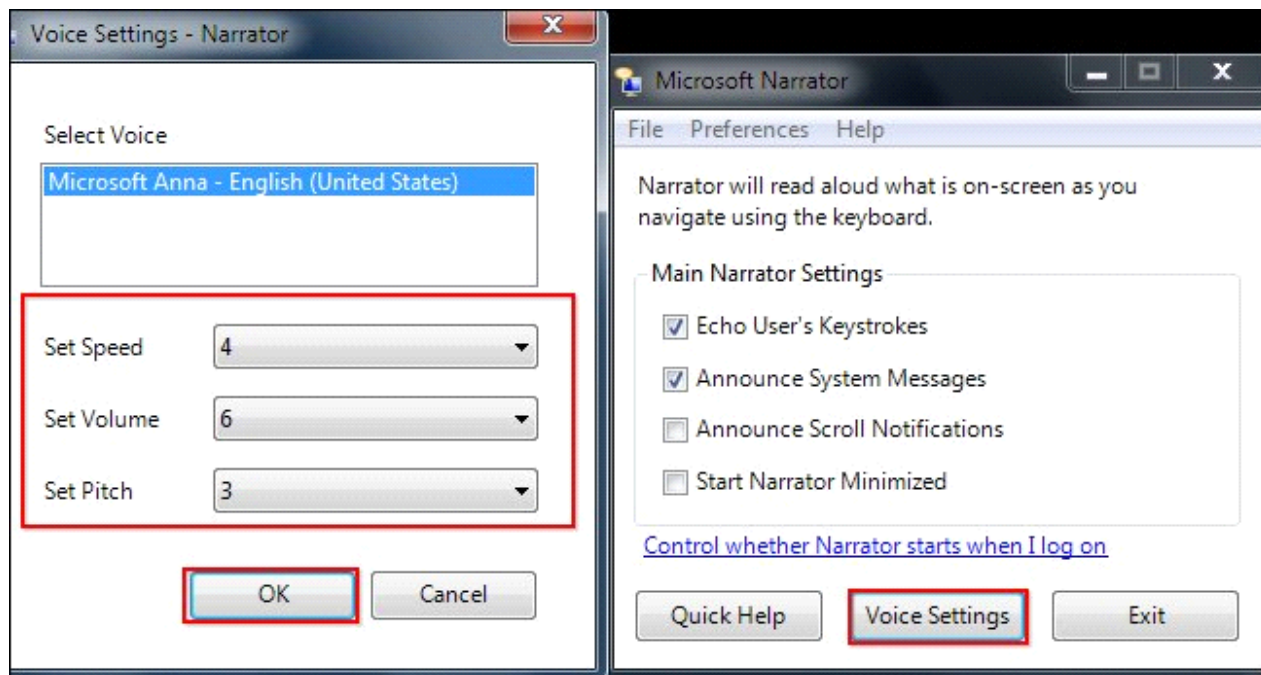
After highlighting the text that you want to hear out loud, all you need to do is click on the "Speak" button that is located in the "Quick Access Toolbar."

Adjusting Voice Settings

If your computer's sounds too computer generated or if it speaks too quickly you can easily adjust the settings. Start by pre ssing the "Start" button and typing "Narrator" and clicking on the icon that shows up.

Next, you will click on the "Voice Settings" button and edit the Speed, Volume, and Pitch till you get a voice you like. Once you are done, press "OK."

Lastly, click on the "Exit" button in the "Narrator" window and confirm that you want to exit.