

## MAGNIFYING WINDOWS AND THE WEB

Just because someone has vision difficulties doesn't mean they can't use a computer. But many Web sites are not designed with accessibility in mind. In fact, Windows itself isn't very accessible.

Nonetheless, you have numerous options. First, you could buy a screen magnifier. It fits over the screen and magnifies text and pictures. [Independent Living Aids](#) makes a wide variety. [Ergo in Demand](#) also sells them.

Another option is a screen reader. These programs actually read the screen aloud. They work with both Windows and Web browsers. You'll find many screen readers listed on the [World Wide Web Consortium's site](#). Screen readers are expensive; be prepared to spend about \$1,000.

You also can change text size in Windows. Right-click a blank spot on the desktop and select Properties. Open the Appearance tab. Under "Font size," select Extra Large or Large. Click Apply. The screen will go dim for a minute. When it returns to normal, click OK.

Windows has other accessibility options. I [have a tip](#) that explains how to use them. And [Windows' Accessibility Wizard](#) can help you set up the options. Microsoft has a guide to [accessibility in Windows XP](#) on its site.

When your father is surfing the Web, he can make text bigger. In Firefox, press the Ctrl key and use the mouse's scroll wheel. This trick also works on some sites in Internet Explorer. Additionally, it works in some programs, including Word and Excel.

Furthermore, you can select a more readable font and font size for Web pages. This works in both IE and Firefox. And it overrides fonts and sizes established on Web pages.

In IE, click Tools>>Internet Options. On the General tab, click Accessibility. Select "Ignore font styles specified on Web pages" and "Ignore font sizes specified on Web pages." Additionally, you can have IE ignore colors. When you're done, click OK. Now click Fonts. Select a font that is easy for your father to read. Click OK>>OK.

Next, you need to specify font size. To do this, click View>>Text Size. Have him pick a font size.

In Firefox, click Tools>>Options and click Content. In the Fonts & Colors section, click Advanced. Deselect "Allow pages to choose their own fonts, instead of my selections above." Then, use the dropdown boxes to select the fonts and sizes he prefers. You'll have to make selections in each of the categories. When you're done, click OK>>OK.

You might also consider switching your father to Opera. This free browser can read Web pages aloud. You'll find a [download link](#) on my site.

You may have trouble finding the option to enable Opera's voice capabilities. So let me explain how it's done. Click Tools>>Preferences and open the Advanced tab. Click on Voice to get the options for voice browsing.

From Steve Bass's email Revised 6/23/2009 JMM

