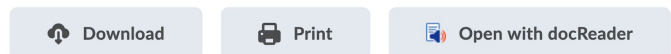# Tech Snacks: Why you should promote the "docReader" tool in Brightspace

Have you ever had a student who struggled to stay focused when reading? Or perhaps a student who struggled to process reading assignments but easily remembered every word you said in lecture? The docReader tool is designed to help students with barriers like these by integrating a number of accessibility and study-aid features into Brightspace. However, many students (and instructors) don't realize it exists.
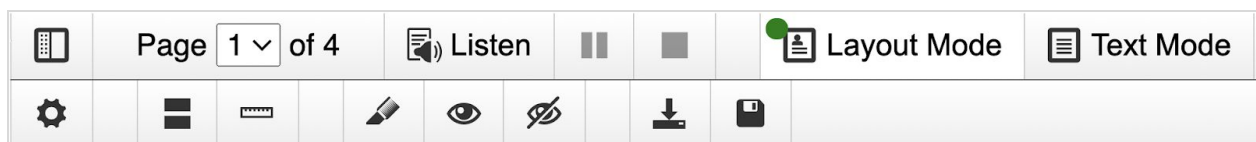
Where is the docReader located?

The "docReader" tool is integrated into the content area of Brightspace. When you upload a document into the content area of Brightspace, students can enable docReader features for that document by scrolling to the bottom of the screen and clicking on a button that says "Open with docReader."

Key features of docReader

The docReader tool has multiple features that make document reading easier and more study-oriented for students. When instructors place documents in the content area of Brightspace, students have the opportunity to take advantage of the study features provided by docReader.

- **Text to Speech** – The listen button on docReader will start a text to speech reading of the document from the top and continue to the bottom. This allows students the opportunity to listen to the information rather than reading it themselves. Students can also select specific text, and the feature will only read the highlighted section. There is now also an option to change between several different reading voices.

- **Highlighter and Download Highlights** – Using the highlighter feature, students can select different colors to highlight information within their document. This allows them to organize the information into whatever categories help them understand the information best. For students who are color blind, docReader offers highlighting with unique

borders. And when the highlighting is complete, the highlighted content can be downloaded.

- **Reading Guides** – There are two different options to choose from: a reading ruler that provides a straight edge, or a narrow reading window that will black out everything but the reading window. Each is adjustable in size and will follow the mouse cursor.

- **Layout Mode vs. Text Mode** – The default is "Layout Mode, which shows all of the formatting that is embedded within the document. If the formatting is distracting for students, they can select Text Mode, which will remove all of the formatting embedded within the document and revert the document to a simple text format.

- **Option to change text and background color** – This is available only when Text Mode is selected. Students can change the text and background color. The default is black text on a white background, which can cause eye strain and fatigue. Students can, for instance, choose to read light text on a dark background instead, which is more conducive to reading and focusing for longer periods of time.

- **Download as .mp3 (audio file)** – This is a useful feature that allows students to save text to speech files so that they have more flexibility with when and where they listen to documents being read. This file type can be uploaded to a phone or other device and can be listened to away from the computer or where there is no internet service. A student once reported that they enjoyed this feature and would "listen" to the course documents on their morning commute to work.

Compatible file formats with docReader

All of the features listed above are available with .pdf and .docx files. However, the only features available with .html are the read-aloud feature and the feature allowing an .mp3 download. Google Doc links are not currently compatible with docReader but you can download your Google Doc as a .docx or .pdf and put it in the Content area of Brightspace.

Tutorial video demonstrating docReader

OTLE has created a video that shows how to use the docReader and demonstrates all of its features. You might consider showing this in your class, posting it in your Brightspace "Course Documents" module or adding it to your syllabus so that students are aware of its usefulness.

Video link here (also accessible by visiting the "MSU-Northern OTLE" video library on YouTube): https://youtu.be/2ldVCkcxuGk.