Demonstrating Some of the Default NVDA Keyboard Shortcuts

# introduction

Hey guys it’s your girl Thee Quinn here, and I’m back with another awesome video. Yes, I know, you guys have not heard from me in a while, but don’t be mad. Its hard to find time to even watch a movie these days. But I’m here with a new video and that’s all that matters. In today’s video, I will be discussing some of the built in NVDA keyboard shortcuts with you guys. Yes, a lot of us use the NVDA screen reader everyday and we don’t even know all the built in keyboard shortcuts that they have provided to make our lives easier. You may recognize some of them, but did you know them all?

# Start of tutorial

So, when I was thinking of what kind of video to post for you guys, it dawned on me that I had never gone through all the default keyboard shortcuts that come with NVDA. Yes, you can create your own custom keyboard shortcuts with the input gestures dialog, but there are also a lot of built in ones that NVDA provides for our convenience. But before we get into the various keyboard shortcuts, first you have to know what the NVDA modifier key is. A modifier key is a key on a computer's keyboard that's only used in conjunction with another key. Modifier keys are used with other keys to perform computer keyboard shortcuts and other commands. Windows uses Control, Alt, Shift, and Windows keys as modifiers by default.

When you install NVDA, it introduces a very important modifier key called the NVDA key. The NVDA key is set to insert by default, which is either the zero on the number pad when the Numb lock is off

or the insert key near the delete, home and end keys in the pack of six. Even though it is the insert key by default, the NVDA modifier key can also be set to the caps Lock key by going to the NVDA menu, preferences, settings, and the keyboard category.

When pressing a combination of keys, you would first hold down all the modifier keys and then press the non modifier keys once and release them all. For example, if you are using a keyboard shortcut Ctrl + shift + P, You would hold down on the ctrl and the shift first, then press the p once and release them all. It is important to know where our modifier key is because it is what we will be using with most if not all of NVDA’s built in commands.

Another important thing you have to know about is the keyboard layout. NVDA comes with two sets of key commands which are known as keyboard layouts. These are the desktop layout and the laptop layout. By default, NVDA is set to use the desktop layout, but you can change this setting to the laptop layout by also going to the NVDA menu, preferences, settings, and the keyboard category. So why have two separate keyboard layouts? This is because the Desktop layout makes heavy use of the numpad while the Numb Lock is off. Most laptops do not have a physical num pad and some require you to use your Fn key along with another key to emulate it. In this case, you would want to switch to the laptop layout. Now that I have covered the basic information about NVDA’s keyboard shortcuts, lets actually look at some of them

Note:

Because everyone might not have their modifier key set to the insert key, I will just say “NVDA key” where you are supposed to use your modifier key. I will also be giving the keyboard shortcuts for both the desktop and laptop keyboard layouts.

First let’s start with some general commands.

# General commands

So, the first basic command that you would need to know is your NVDA key + 1

This toggles input help mode on or off.

Input help mode is useful when you want to learn and practice the location of the keys on your keyboard.

While in input help mode, when you press a key or keyboard shortcut, it will announce the name of the key or combination of keys.

If you press a key or combination of keys that is set to perform a specific action, it will describe what it does.

This is good as you are able to learn your keys and what they do without affecting the operation of the computer.

Another one is the command that is used to access all the settings for NVDA.

This command is the NVDA key + N for both layouts, and this command opens the NVDA menu.

Next is the command to quit NVDA.

That is the NVDA key + Q

Select exit by pressing enter on it or tabbing to ok and pressing enter

Another one is a command that you can use to toggle application sleep mode on or off.

This is useful in applications that provide their own speech or screen reading features.

Sleep mode disables all NVDA commands and speech/braille output for the current application.

note that NVDA will only retain the Sleep Mode setting until it is restarted.

This command is the NVDA key + Shift + S for the desktop layout, and the NVDA key + Shift + C for the laptop layout.

Now let’s move to some commands that are used to control the speech of the screen reader.

# speech

The first one is the one that is used to stop the speech.

There are times when the screen reader is reading on and on and you just want it to shut up.

In that case, the key that you would use to shut it up is your Ctrl key.

The next one is the key used to pause or restart the speech.

There are some times when you want the screen reader to shut up but just for a little while.

In that case, you would use your shift key.

Now there are also some cases where you would want the screen reader to just read an entire page without stopping, and without you having to keep pressing your down arrow.

NVDA has a command for this, and it is called the say all command.

For the desktop layout this combination is the NVDA key + your down arrow.

For the lap top layout it is the NVDA key + A

There are some times when you would like to stop the screen reader from talking without quitting NVDA totally.

In that case, you would use the NVDA key + s for both layouts.

This command Toggles the speech mode between speech, beeps and off.

Now let’s move on to some commands used for reading.

# Reading commands

Other than your usual arrow keys and some other keys, NVDA provides some other built in keyboard shortcuts for reading text.

The first one is one that allows you to read the current line that you are on.

For the desktop layout it is the NVDA key + the up arrow.

And for the laptop layout it is the NVDA key + L

Pressing this combination twice quickly spells the line.

And pressing it thrice quickly spells the line phonetically.

Next is the command to read whatever text the you have selected.

For the desktop layout it is the NVDA key + shift plus the up arrow

And for the laptop layout it is the NVDA key + shift plus s

And that is it for the reading commands.

# Reporting location and other system information

The first command in this category is the one to read the title of a window.

This command is useful, because some of the time you may have a window open, but you are not sure which one.

Say for example you have more than one document open in Microsoft Word, and you want to confirm which one you are currently in.

Now the command for this is the NVDA key + T for both layouts.

Pressing this combination twice quickly spells the title of the window.

And pressing it thrice quickly copies it to the clip board.

Another one is a command that reports the control that you are currently focused on.

This is good especially when you are in a dialog and you want to know what option you are currently focused on.

The command for this is your NVDA key + tab for both layouts.

Pressing it twice quickly will spell the information.

There is also another one which is useful for dialogs.

This one actually reads out an entire window.

This is useful because sometimes you might be in a dialog and you did not get to hear the message/instructions in the dialog properly, and when you try to press your tab key to get to it, it won’t work.

The command to use in this case to read the entire window is the NVDA key + B for both layouts.

Another one which I have never used before is your NVDA key + end for the desktop layout.

And the NVDA key + Shift + End for laptop layouts.

This reports the Status Bar if NVDA finds one.

Pressing it twice quickly will spell the information.

And pressing it thrice quickly will copy it to the clipboard.

Now one extremely useful command that I use multiple times per day is one which reports the current time.

This is extremely convenient because you don’t have to navigate all the way to the notification area to hear the current time.

That command is the NVDA key + F12 for both layouts.

pressing this twice quickly will report today’s date.

another useful one is the command to report text formatting.

I use this in a lot of applications such as Microsoft Word, Excel, or even in the browser.

Because we can’t see text, this command reports various things about the format of the text such as its font, font size, whether it is bold or underlined, and more.

This command is the NVDA key + f for both layouts.

Pressing this twice quickly shows the information in a window so that you can go through it.

Another one that I find myself using lately is one that reports the destination of any link that you are focused on.

This is good especially if you want to know where a link is going to bring you before you click on it.

The command for this is the NVDA key + k

If you press it twice quickly it will show it in a window for more careful review

Now here is another very useful one that is great for laptop users.

This is a command that you can use to report your battery status.

This command is the NVDA key + shift + b for both layouts.

So, this will tell you if your computer is currently charging or not, as well as the current charge percentage.

Another one is the shortcut to read whatever text that you have on the clip board.

That is the NVDA key + C for both layouts.

Alright so we are finished with those commands.

Now let’s move to commands that toggle which information NVDA reads.

# commands that toggle which information NVDA reads

now for most of us, we prefer to hear each letter that we type on the keyboard.

there are some persons however who find this quite annoying.

well there is a command that you can use to toggle this setting on or off.

that command is the NVDA key + 2 for both layouts.

another one is a command that you can use to toggle the speaking of each word that you type on or off.

that is the NVDA key + 3 for both layouts.

this next one toggles the speaking of the keyboard command keys on or off while you are typing.

that command is the NVDA key + 4 for both layouts.

This includes key combinations such as control plus another letter.

The last one in this category is a command that is used to toggle mouse tracking on or off.

When this is enabled, NVDA will announce the text currently under the mouse pointer as you move it around the screen.

This allows you to find things on the screen, by physically moving the mouse, rather than trying to find them through object navigation.

This command is NVDA + m for both layouts.

Now let’s move on to some commands relating to browse mode

# Browse mode commands

Now I won’t go in depth about what browse and focus modes are because I already went through that in detail in my video that I did on navigating your browser faster and more efficiently.

But basically, you are in focus mode any time that you are allowed to edit, such as in an edit box or programs such as Microsoft Word or Notepad.

You are in browse mode any time that you are not allowed to edit anything, but you are free to browse, such as when browsing the internet.

Now the first command in this category is the one to toggle between browse and focus mode.

This command is the NVDA key + spacebar for both layouts

Another command which I use almost everyday is the find command.

When in browse mode, you can use this command to open up a find dialog where you can search for any word or phrase.

This command is the NVDA key + Ctrl + F for both layouts.

There are two other commands related to the find dialog.

These commands work for text that you have previously searched for.

The first one is the command to find the next occurrence of the text in the document you previously searched for.

That command is the NVDA key + F3 for both layouts.

The second one is the command used to find the previous occurrence of the text in the document you previously searched for.

That command is the NVDA key + Shift + F3 for both layouts.

The last one is a command used to open the elements list.

That command is the NVDA key + F7 for both layouts.

This Lists various types of elements, such as links and headings.

There are also some very useful single letter navigation keys that when navigating in browse mode, but as I said before, you can watch my video on navigating the browser efficiently for a full tutorial on them.