NVDA Cheat Sheet: Download, Install, and Keystrokes

For web accessibility testing on Windows. Last checked November 2026.

Download

- **Official download page:** nvaccess.org/download
- NVDA is free and open source. The download page asks for a donation, but you can skip it and still download.
- Take the latest stable release (2026.2 as of this writing). Avoid beta and release candidate builds for client testing.
- Requires Windows 10 or 11. Windows 11 on ARM works, which covers a Windows 11 ARM virtual machine on a Mac. Windows 10 on ARM and 32-bit Windows are no longer supported.

Install

1. Run the downloaded file. NVDA starts talking right away in a temporary copy.
2. Read and accept the license agreement.
3. Choose **Install NVDA on this computer**. A portable copy also works, but the installed copy handles security prompts and sign-in screens better.
4. Leave **Create desktop icon and shortcut key** checked. This sets CTRL+ALT+N to start NVDA.
5. When the Welcome dialog opens, set the keyboard layout and the NVDA key (see the next section).
6. Restart NVDA after installing.

The NVDA key

Most commands use the NVDA key, written as **NVDA** below. By default it is INSERT or NUMPAD INSERT.

- **Desktop layout:** uses the number pad for some reading commands.
- **Laptop layout:** uses letter keys instead. Use this on a Mac keyboard or in a Mac virtual machine.
- On a Mac keyboard, turn on **Use Caps Lock as an NVDA modifier key**, since there is no Insert key.
- To change these later: NVDA menu (NVDA+N), then Preferences, then Settings, then Keyboard.
- To type a real Caps Lock, press CAPS LOCK twice quickly.

Essential keystrokes

Action	Desktop layout	Laptop layout
Start NVDA	CTRL+ALT+N	CTRL+ALT+N
Stop speech	CTRL	CTRL
Pause or resume speech	SHIFT	SHIFT
Read from here to the end (Say All)	NVDA+DOWN ARROW	NVDA+A
Read current line	NVDA+UP ARROW	NVDA+L
Read window title	NVDA+T	NVDA+T
Say the focused element	NVDA+TAB	NVDA+TAB
Repeat the last thing spoken	NVDA+X	NVDA+X
Open the NVDA menu	NVDA+N	NVDA+N
Input help (say what a key does)	NVDA+1, press keys, then NVDA+1 again	Same
Speech mode (talk, beeps, off)	NVDA+S	NVDA+S
Quit NVDA	NVDA+Q	NVDA+Q

Web page navigation

On web pages, NVDA uses Browse Mode. Single letters jump between elements. Add SHIFT to move backward.

Move to next	Key
Heading	H
Heading at level 1 through 6	1 to 6
Landmark	D
Link	K
Unvisited link	U
Visited link	V
Button	B
Form field	F
Edit field	E

Move to next	Key
Combo box	C
Checkbox	X
Radio button	R
Table	T
List	L
List item	I
Graphic	G
Block quote	Q

Lists, forms and tables

Action	Keystroke
Elements list (links, headings, form fields, buttons, landmarks)	NVDA+F7
Switch between Browse Mode and Focus Mode	NVDA+SPACEBAR
Enter Focus Mode on a field	ENTER
Leave Focus Mode	ESC
Turn single-letter navigation on or off	NVDA+SHIFT+SPACEBAR
Move between table cells	CTRL+ALT+ARROW KEYS

Testing tools built into NVDA

- **Speech Viewer:** NVDA menu (NVDA+N), then Tools, then Speech Viewer. It shows every announcement as text, which you can copy into findings.
- **Screen Curtain:** NVDA+CTRL+ESC blacks out the screen so you test by ear the way a blind user would. Press it again to turn it off.
- **Developer info:** NVDA+F1 opens the log with role, name and state details for the current element.

Testing tips

- Pair NVDA with Chrome and with Firefox. Both are common among real NVDA users.
- If NVDA is silent after a page loads, press NVDA+DOWN ARROW (laptop: NVDA+A) to start reading.
- Record the NVDA version, browser and version, and Windows version with every finding.