TalkBack for Android Cheat Sheet: Turn On, Set Up, and Gestures

For web accessibility testing. Last checked November 2026.

Get it

- TalkBack comes with most Android phones as part of the Android Accessibility Suite. Update it from the Google Play Store.
- **Google's guide:** Use TalkBack gestures
- Samsung phones ship their own build of TalkBack. Gestures are mostly the same, but menus can be labeled differently.
- No Android phone? The free Android Studio emulator runs on Apple Silicon Macs. Install the Android Accessibility Suite on the emulator image from the Play Store.

Set up a shortcut before you start

TalkBack changes how every touch works. Set up a quick way out before you turn it on.

1. Go to Settings, then Accessibility, then TalkBack, and turn on the TalkBack shortcut.
2. Now press and hold both volume keys for about 3 seconds to turn TalkBack on or off.
3. Practice gestures with a four-finger tap, or open the TalkBack tutorial from TalkBack settings.

Essential gestures

These are the default gestures on current phones with multi-finger gesture support.

Action	**Gesture**
Turn TalkBack on or off	Hold both volume keys for 3 seconds
Explore the screen	Drag one finger
Next or previous item	Swipe right or swipe left
Activate the selected item	Double-tap
Long press	Double-tap and hold
Pause or resume speech	Two-finger tap
Read from the next item	Two-finger triple-tap

Action	Gesture
Scroll	Two-finger swipe in any direction
Go back	Swipe down then left
Go home	Swipe up then left
Open the TalkBack menu	Three-finger tap
Copy text of focused item	Three-finger double-tap

Reading controls and web navigation

Reading controls pick what a swipe up or down moves by: headings, links, controls, characters, words and more.

Action	Gesture
Next reading control	Three-finger swipe down
Previous reading control	Three-finger swipe up
Move to next item of that type	Swipe down
Move to previous item of that type	Swipe up
Open screen search	Swipe left then down

Set the reading control to Headings to scan a page the way most screen reader users do.

Testing tools

- **Display speech output:** in TalkBack settings, open Advanced settings, then Developer settings, and turn on Display speech output. Spoken text appears on screen, so screenshots capture it.
- **Accessibility Scanner:** a free Google app that flags small touch targets, low contrast and missing labels in apps and web pages.
- **Text formatting announcements:** TalkBack 16.2 can announce bold, italics, font size and colors. Turn it on under Verbosity settings when checking text styling.
- **Keyboard testing:** TalkBack 16.2 adds an enhanced physical keyboard layout with a browse mode for web pages.

Testing tips

- Pair TalkBack with Chrome for websites. Also test inside the client's native app if they have one.
- Test at the largest font size and display size in Settings, Accessibility.
- Record the device model, Android version, TalkBack version and browser with every finding.