VoiceOver for Mac Cheat Sheet: Turn On, Set Up, and Keystrokes

For web accessibility testing. Last checked November 2026.

Get it

- VoiceOver is built into macOS. There is nothing to download or license.
- **Apple's guide:** VoiceOver User Guide for Mac
- Keep macOS and Safari up to date. VoiceOver changes with each macOS release.

Turn it on

1. Press COMMAND+F5 to turn VoiceOver on or off. On a Mac with Touch ID, you can also hold COMMAND and press Touch ID three times.
2. Or go to System Settings, then Accessibility, then VoiceOver.
3. The first time it starts, VoiceOver offers a Quick Start tutorial. It takes about 15 minutes and is worth doing once.
4. Open VoiceOver Utility (VO+F8) to change the voice, speech rate and verbosity.

The VO key

Most commands use the VoiceOver modifier, written as **VO** below.

- By default, VO is CONTROL+OPTION held together.
- You can also set CAPS LOCK as the VO key in VoiceOver Utility, under General. This is easier on the hands for long sessions.
- Quick Nav lets you navigate with arrow keys or single letters without holding VO. Toggle it with LEFT ARROW+RIGHT ARROW pressed together, or turn on single-key Quick Nav with VO+Q.

Essential keystrokes

Action	**Keystroke**
Turn VoiceOver on or off	COMMAND+F5
Stop speech	CONTROL
Read from here to the end	VO+A
Next or previous item	VO+RIGHT ARROW or VO+LEFT ARROW
Activate the item (click)	VO+SPACEBAR

Action	Keystroke
Describe the item in the VoiceOver cursor	VO+F3
Open the Rotor	VO+U
Open VoiceOver Utility	VO+F8
Keyboard help (say what a key does)	VO+K, then ESC to leave
Turn Quick Nav on or off	LEFT ARROW+RIGHT ARROW together

Web page navigation

These work with VO held down. With single-key Quick Nav on, press the letter alone. Add SHIFT to move backward.

Move to next	With VO	Single-key Quick Nav
Heading	VO+COMMAND+H	H
Heading at level 1 through 6	Use the Rotor	1 to 6
Landmark	Use the Rotor	Use the Rotor
Link	VO+COMMAND+L	L
Visited link	VO+COMMAND+V	V
Form control	VO+COMMAND+J	J
Button	Use the Rotor	B
Table	VO+COMMAND+T	T
List	VO+COMMAND+X	X
Graphic	VO+COMMAND+G	G

The Rotor, forms and tables

Action	Keystroke
Open the Rotor (lists of headings, links, landmarks, form controls)	VO+U, then LEFT or RIGHT ARROW to change lists
Interact with a group, table or web area	VO+SHIFT+DOWN ARROW
Stop interacting	VO+SHIFT+UP ARROW
Move between table cells (while interacting)	VO+ARROW KEYS
Read the current table row	VO+R

Testing tools built into VoiceOver

- **Caption Panel:** shows everything VoiceOver says as text on screen. Turn it on in VoiceOver Utility under Visuals. Copy from it into findings.
- **Copy last phrase:** VO+SHIFT+C copies the last thing VoiceOver said to the clipboard.
- **Screen Curtain:** VO+SHIFT+FN+UNDERSCORE blacks out the screen so you test by ear.

Testing tips

- Pair VoiceOver with Safari. That is the combination real Mac VoiceOver users rely on; Chrome support is weaker.
- Turn on "Use keyboard navigation to move focus between controls" in System Settings, Keyboard, so TAB reaches every control.
- In Safari, also turn on "Press Tab to highlight each item on a webpage" under Settings, Advanced.
- Record the macOS version, Safari version and VoiceOver settings with every finding.