

Friday, March 03, 2006
Proofreading and Learning Disability:
Microsoft Reader as a Proofreading Tool

Some weeks ago I had a Psychoeducational Evaluation done to prove, again, that I have Learning Disabilities. I have Cerebral Palsy, and as a result, visual-perceptual-motor impairment; in addition to walking with forearm crutches and using a power chair. The reason I had to prove again that I have Learning Disabilities is I want to get a masters degree in history. Even though Learning Disabilities and Cerebral Palsy do not go away or change, today, most colleges will not accept a Psychoeducational Evaluation that is more than three years old as proof of Learning Disabilities and provide accommodations. This is due to the Americans with Disabilities Act. The last evaluation that comes even close to the most recent one in my case is an Individual Education Program in June 1988.

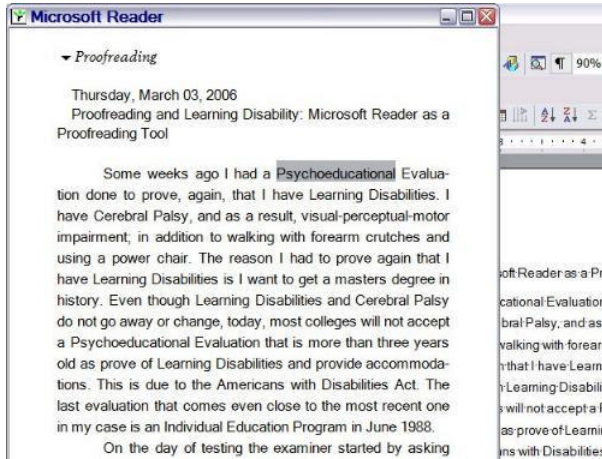
On the day of testing the examiner started by asking some background questions. She asked about my hobbies and my profession; I told her about my website, and that I teach. She seemed to be impressed, or at the very least interested, that someone with Dyslexia and visual-perceptual-motor impairment would choose a profession and a hobby that require a lot of reading and writing. Two things I have problems with. I explained it, simply, takes me more time to read and write than others; for reading I allow myself more time, and for writing I use Microsoft Word also allowing myself enough time to work. One gains speed with practice, so I am somewhat faster than I used to be. Thus, practice does make perfect, or better in my case. The most difficult part of the writing process for me, I continued, is proofreading. In college, I lost count of the papers my instructors returned with “**Proofread before handing in**” written across the top. No matter how many times I read my papers, I would always miss something. Until I found that [Microsoft Reader](#) can be used as a proofreading tool. The examiner asked how, and I gave her a short sketch. She wrote down the information and said it was a good idea. After some thought, it is an idea I want to share.

As a result of my visual-perceptual-motor impairment, I rely on my auditory skills, that is, I speak a sentence as I type it. But, sometimes I will speak a word or phrase and then not type it; and not pick up during proofreading that the word or phrase is not on the page. As I proof my written work I read aloud, and sometimes when a word or phrase is not on the page I read as though it is, for it should be there. I do not see that it is missing. Using [Microsoft Reader](#) with [Microsoft's Text-to-Speech Package](#) I compensate for my impairment.

Most computers have a speech synthesizer which allows [Microsoft Reader](#)^a with

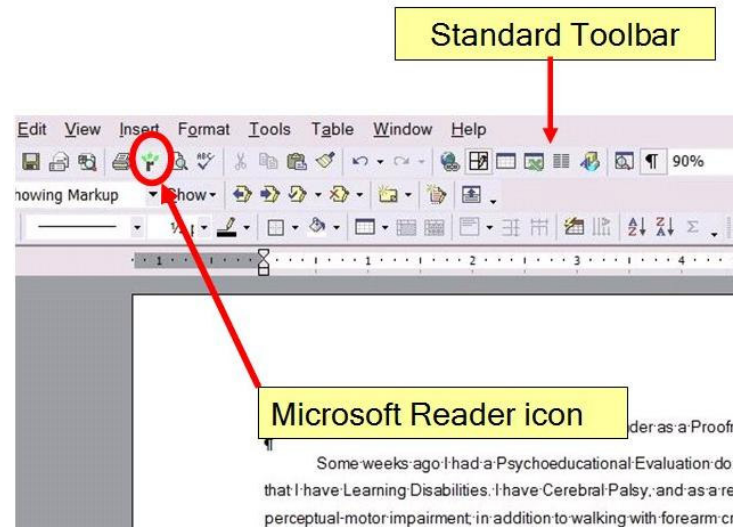
[Microsoft's Text-to-Speech Package](#)^b to

read e-book files aloud. While, I do not see that a word or phrase is missing from a sentence; I do hear that it is missing from a sentence. [Microsoft Reader](#) only reads what is on the page and with the same file open in Microsoft Word; Reader can be stopped so corrections can be made. In addition to a missing word or phrase, Microsoft



Reader helps me pick up a few grammatical errors such as errors in subject-verb agreement, verb tense and missing word endings, for a sentence with these errors just does not sound right. For errors in spelling and punctuation, I use Word's spell and grammar check functions, for they save time. But, the computer can not do it all; it is just a box. So, I supplement the computer with a dictionary and a grammar handbook.

Microsoft Word can be use to create e-book files by downloading and installing the [Word Add-in: Read in Microsoft Reader](#).^c This free program enables Word to create e-book files from any Word document. After installing Read in Microsoft Reader and restarting the computer. Open the Word document that you



want to make an e-book file (proofread) and on the Standard Toolbar you will see the Reader icon. Save the document, and then click the Reader icon. Read in Microsoft Reader creates an e-book file of the document and opens it in [Microsoft Reader](#) ready for proofreading.

To use [Microsoft Reader](#) as a proofreading tool the above programs need to be installed in the following order:

1. [Microsoft Reader](#)
2. [Microsoft's Text-to-Speech Package](#)
3. [Word Add-in: Read in Microsoft Reader](#)

All of the programs are free.

Using [Microsoft Reader](#) as a proofreading tool has made it easier for me to write and write well even with Learning Disabilities. Now that we all type something every day proofreading is more important than ever. After all, there is no point in sharing an idea if no one can understand it. That is what writing is about—sharing ideas.

Keegan

^a <http://www.microsoft.com/reader/downloads/pc.asp>

^b <http://www.microsoft.com/reader/developers/downloads/tts.asp>

^c <http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyID=f1f5a2a4-b30c-4f2b-be85-bc9443e1bc61&DisplayLang=en>