

## Reference

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## Appendices

The appendices are available from the online version of this article at <https://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/myshare>

# [RESOURCES] TLT WIRED



## Paul Raine

In this column, we discuss the latest developments in ed-tech, as well as tried and tested apps and platforms, and the integration between teaching and technology. We invite readers to submit articles on their areas of interest. Please contact the editor before submitting.

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Paul Raine has been a Japan-based teacher and coder since 2006. He has developed the web-based language teaching and learning platform *TeacherTools.Digital*, and many other web-based tools.

## Reader Mode: Sweeping Away Barriers to Reading

Alexandra Burke

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For most of us, reading is as easy as breathing. Sweep the text with your eyes and zoom in on the structures that support reading, such as punctuation. But what if the text is a bit small; or it seems to be a strain to read it because of the layout (fully justified text can be a reading barrier); or you “don’t have enough time,” and your reading material becomes a doom tower on your desk; or much like nearly 20% of the population, you have barriers that prevent you reading with the ease that others take for granted? You may not even be aware of them. Enter the world of reader mode and accessibility.

“I don’t have a disability. This is irrelevant to me and my students,” you might say while you reach for glasses, a brighter light, or a favorite font. Have you ever walked away from a YouTube video or Zoom presentation to do something else while still paying attention to the topic? These are all ways in which you have compensated to make reading or learning more enjoyable. Ability status is irrelevant to your need or desire to use accessibility tools.

In your classroom, there are likely to be a number of students who have reading difficulty.

If they are dyslexic, it may be up to five times more physically draining for them to visually read the same material as their peers (Richards et al., 1999). But turn on reader mode, and some of them will be able to learn how to change the brightness, font size, line spacing, or background color. Even more critically, most reading mode systems will read the text aloud to you. Language learners benefit every time they hear content.

Assuming up to 20% of your students have reading challenges, within that group, about 40% may have a type of reading barrier that does not respond to traditional solutions because of how their brain interprets, stores, and retrieves words. Reading is another hidden challenge for people with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Up to 51% of males and 46% of females with ADHD have a reading disorder compared with 14% and 7% of their neurotypical peers, respectively (Yoshimasu et al., 2010). These barriers to learning are not related to how much reading children are exposed to, willpower or intellectual potential: For some, the text on the page will simply disassemble, or some of the words will fade or move.

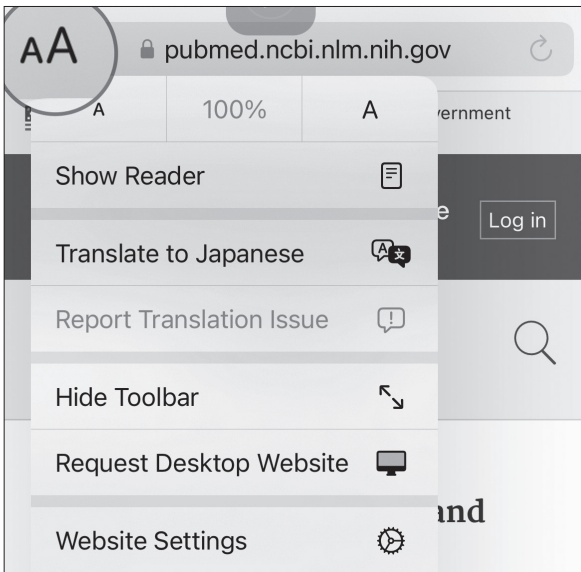
In addition, looking at this with a cultural focus, Todd Beuckens, creator of the website ELL-LO.org (English Listening Lesson Library Online) and JALT Listening SIG member, recently told me that of the world’s 6,500 languages, only 3,000 of them have a written form. Of these, 100 are used as a medium of instruction. Thus listening is an innate skill and the driver of communication and

language acquisition (personal communication, September 6, 2023). Furthermore, the contemporary documentation practices in these languages is in its infancy, as is frequently the case with many of the First People’s languages. Listening is a critical life skill.

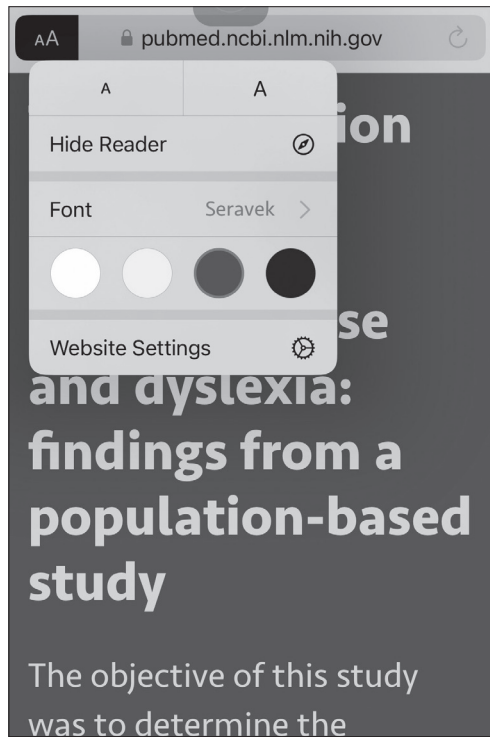
### Reader Mode

So, let’s begin with reader mode. Most web-sites have it, but you may not have noticed it. For example, in Safari, it appears as a small “Aa” or perhaps a book symbol, on the left side of the URL (see Figure 1). Click on it and you see a panel that includes the option to “show reader.” Click on that, and you will get options for page background, preferred font, and possibly read aloud, depending on your device settings (see Figure 2).

**Figure 1.**  
*Reader Mode in Safari*



**Figure 2.**  
*The Reader Mode Options*

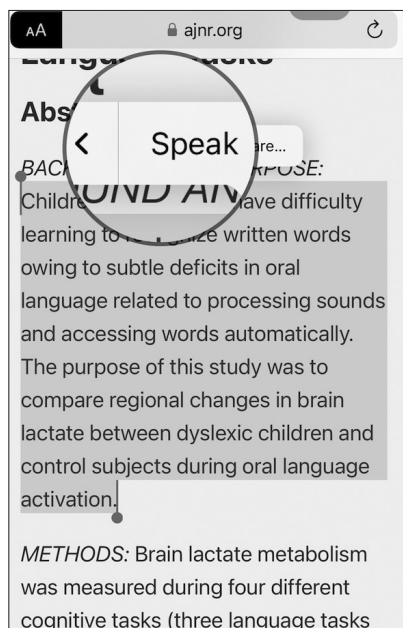


Selecting text can also allow the reader to listen directly to the content (see Figure 3). Imagine how much less stressed your eyes and shoulders might be if you selected and listened to content written by your students instead of having to read it. If you have Microsoft, all products include the Immersive Reader function via the View menu or by right clicking depending on devices, software, and browser, for example Edge. Immersive Reader has a wide range of tools, including read aloud, syllabification, parts of speech, and picture dictionaries.



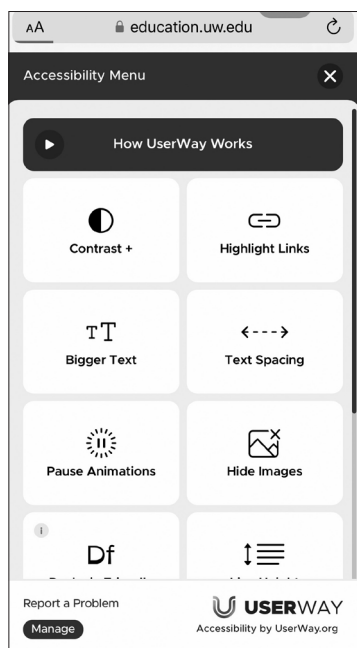
Has your email address changed? Don’t forget to let us know: <membership-office@jalt.org>. Help us to help you!

**Figure 3.**  
The Read Aloud Function on Reader Mode



Some websites have added accessibility plugins which give more options to users to make the screen their own, such as adjusting the alignment of text. Ideally, adjusting the column width will also make text easier to read (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4.**  
Additional Accessibility Plugins



Students will probably not find these tools on their own, so as a teacher, you will need to become familiar with these options to demonstrate and normalize the concept of using them. Get students to try them out and discuss which settings they prefer so that they will see that one size does not truly fit all. Due to a widening of the types of research participants, a growing body of evidence suggests that paper is appropriate for many, but not for all readers. The longer students stay in education, the longer they will live: It is that simple (Yang et al., 2019).

### Final Thoughts

Why don't some websites have reader mode? At present, reader mode seems to be twinned with the ability to remove images and popups. This pairing is problematic as, by ensuring the advertising stream flows easily, it blocks the availability of reader mode. So, it is an ethical issue for every website owner. I would like to see a solution that would allow users to access text-based content in the way that meets their needs, as exemplified in Japan's Reading Barrier Free Act of 2019 (MEXT 2019) and the United Nation's Sustainability Development Goal 4: Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All (U.N., 2015).

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## Flippity as a Tool for Collaborative Activity-Making

Gutkovskii Aleksandr

The COVID-19 pandemic has tested not only educators' resilience, but also their ingenuity. Adapting to a sudden shift to online and hybrid changes led many teachers needing to find web-based tools that could be used in an online learning environment (Cowie, 2021; Hasnine et al., 2020). Now, as the classes have returned to face-to-face format, some of the online tools have found their way into the physical classroom setting. One such online tool is Flippity (<https://www.flippity.net/>): a web-based platform that can be used for designing learning materials and activities. This article outlines several tools available on Flippity and explores how these tools can be used to create student-centered and collaborative activities.

### Overview

Flippity is a website that was designed by Steve Fortna. It contains 28 tools for activity creation that can all be used free of charge. This website can be used to generate vocabulary games, board games, flashcards, randomizers, and leaderboards. The generation process does not require any registration and is done via text input for simple tools and via Google Sheets for more complex ones.

The intuitive interface makes Flippity accessible to both teachers and students. As a result, this platform can be used as a tool for empowering learners by including them in the activity creation. Such inclusion and collaboration between learners during the activity-making process can lead to higher engagement levels and better retention of material (Bier, 2015; Chen, 2018). Teachers can introduce Flippity in the classroom, scaffold the activity-development process, and then ask students to collaborate in groups to make activities for each other. The examples below demonstrate several Flippity-based activities that I tried with my students and show how these activities can be used to improve collaboration and make the language classroom a bit more student-centered.

### Activity Examples

The sample activities given below illustrate only a fraction of the tools available on the Flippity

website among which are board games, matching games, word searches, and word scrambles.

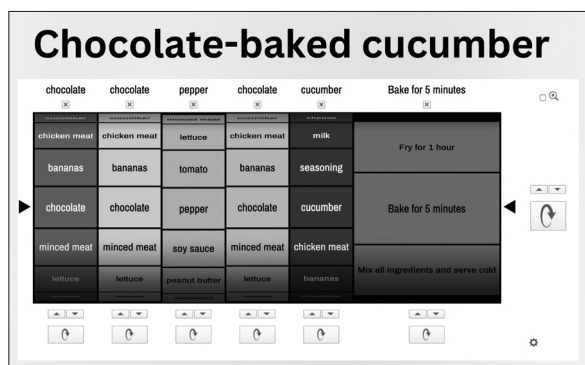
## Randomizer

Randomizer is a Flippity tool that can be used for the creation of several randomized wheels. One activity using a Flippity randomizer tool was connected to the unit about food. In this unit, students learned the names of ingredients, cooking verbs, and sequence words. The randomizer activity was introduced to practice these points. In the activity, students used Google Sheets to collaboratively create lists of ingredients and cooking verbs. Then they used a randomizer tool to generate a random recipe based on their lists. Next, they were asked to name their recipes and share them with the class using sequence words. The recipes featured completely random mixes of ingredients, which added fun to the activity (see Figure 1). Finally, students were asked to discuss what recipes they would actually like to try.

This simple yet engaging game allowed students to practice target grammar in a participatory and learner-centered way. Naturally, this game could have been made using pens and paper, but the Flippity randomizer enabled a more collaborative and smoother activity, saving some paper in the process.

**Figure 1.**

*Sample Recipe Activity From the Randomizer Tool*



## Word Master

Word Master is a clone of the well-known puzzle game Wordle. The goal of Wordle is to guess a 5-letter word: Players do it by typing different words and revealing the correct letters. I first tried using the original Wordle in class, but in doing so I encountered several significant limitations. Players are limited to playing the original Wordle once per day with words changing every day, so it is impossible to

customize the game. Additionally, the original game was designed for native speakers, so some words were too difficult for my students.

Word Master, on the other hand, is customizable and does not impose limitations on the number or length of words. As a result, the difficulty of the words and the number of letters can be adjusted depending on the students' levels. However, there is one caveat that should be mentioned. Unlike Wordle, Word Master does not do a dictionary check, so students can type a random string of letters instead of a word. Therefore, it might be a good idea to set a rule for using only existing words.

In my class, we played Word Master for vocabulary revision and as a warm-up game. After students had grasped the rules of the game, I relegated the game-making process to them, so different groups would make games for each other and play these games to practice vocabulary. Despite its simplicity, Word Master was very popular among students, so eventually we played it every week.

## Bingo

The bingo game found on the Flippity website is not very different from the original game. However, the online version simplifies both the game-making and playing processes, while also removing the necessity to print bingo sheets. The game can be created and played on a phone, so both creating and playing the game can be done in the span of one class. In my class, we used bingo to revise tenses using yes/no questions. Instead of writing questions myself, I asked groups of students to create their own bingo questions. After that, students would play the game walking around the class and asking questions to each other. As with the previous examples, there is nothing revolutionary about the Flippity version of Bingo. However, the online version makes this well-known game more accessible and reduces paper usage.

## Possible Challenges

Teachers should be aware of some potential challenges related to Flippity. First, different tools use different activity generation procedures. As mentioned earlier, complex tools, such as Flippity Randomizer, require inputting data in Google Sheets, so using these tools in class might require some prior scaffolding. Also, some tools such as the Memory Game allow the usage of images, but they cannot be directly uploaded to Flippity. Instead, the images need to be found on the Internet and embedded

using links. This process is not very complex, but it can be rather frustrating, as not all file formats are supported. It would also be advisable to double-check the activities that use pictures to make sure that all the images are displayed properly.

### Conclusion

Flippity does not revolutionize the activity-making process, but it provides an easy and intuitive set of tools that can be used by both teachers and students. The simplicity of Flippity allows the inclusion of students in the activity-creating process that, in turn, might enhance student collaboration and improve learner engagement.

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## [JALT PRACTICE] BOOK REVIEWS



### Robert Taferner & Stephen Case

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This month's column features Victoria Thomas's review of *Good English Vibes: Learning for a Brighter Future*

## Good English Vibes: Learning for a Brighter Future

[Samuel Rose. Asahi Press, 2022. (Answer key and tests in the teacher's manual) p. 90. ¥1,870. ISBN: 978-4-255-15688-0.]

Reviewed by Victoria Thomas, University of Shimane

**G**ood English Vibes: Learning for a Brighter Future is a compact 15-unit English communication textbook. This book is marketed for university-age learners with a TOEIC score ranging between 400 to 500 or an existing English vocab-

ulary of 800 to 1000 headwords. Fourteen units follow roughly the same pattern. The 15th unit is a placeholder for the review test, which is provided in the teacher's manual.

The 14 units follow a six-page pattern. The first section features a dictation exercise on the unit's topic, consisting of five sentences with an increasing number of missing words. According to Newton and Nation (2021), dictations are an excellent source of practice for listening for details, spelling, and general focus on form. After the dictation, there is a list of 10 vocabulary items, which students are asked to define in English. More advanced students can use this as an in-class challenge, but for less proficient

