

Brenda Coan
Product Trial

The product trial that I chose is the screen reader JAWS 7 for Windows by Freedom Scientific. JAWS is the most popular screen reader application available and can be found at http://www.freedomscientific.com/fs_products/software_jaws.asp or by calling 1-800-444-4443. Depending on the JAWS version an individual needs, the professional software can cost anywhere between \$1095 to 1495 plus tax while the standard can cost between \$895 to 1075. As one of my low vision friends pointed out, this is before any additional costs of having to have someone help with a computer setup.

JAWS is primarily designed for blind, low vision or individuals with learning disabilities who need a screen reading speech synthesizer. It outputs information on the screen to a speech synthesizer, Braille output device, or refreshable Braille display. For a beginning user, the amount of different commands to remember can make it quite difficult to use at first. I am still learning how to use it since I have a strict mandate that I must build accessible websites. The goal of building sites is to make them as universally designed and accessible as possible, so I test the sites using some of the tools a person might use to surf the Internet, such as JAWS. For my main trial, I tested JAWS on the new CED calendar at www.ced.csulb.edu/calendar. The calendar is a new and complex addition to the site. The goal of using JAWS is to test the readability of the site and how it interacts with the content. First I let JAWS read through the entire site without interrupting it and I was able to understand the calendar. Next I tested the readability of the site if I interacted with the forms. I quickly discovered that I was lost as I was not sure what calendar I was listening to. So I took a few days and added a line to the top of the form section that gives the "Current Calendar View". This is kind of a dynamic title to assist individuals with understanding what they were looking at or listening to. Without using JAWS, the calendar would have been technically accessible based on a software checker, but it would have failed on a live test. The calendar in its current form would not be up had I not tested it.