

## Accessibility Features in Windows Vista with reference to Windows XP

Both Windows Vista and Windows XP include built-in accessibility settings and programs that make it easier to see, hear, and use the computer. The accessibility settings and programs in Windows Vista are easy to find and setup through the Ease of Access Centre which is an improvement on the Windows XP Accessibility Wizard. In addition, Windows Vista has a speech recognition program which is not available in Windows XP.

On the downside, Windows Vista does not include SerialKeys. In Windows XP, SerialKeys provided support so that alternative input devices, such as augmentative communication devices, could be plugged into the computer's serial port. If this feature is needed in Vista, it is important to install an alternative solution prior to upgrading to Windows Vista. Recommended solutions are:

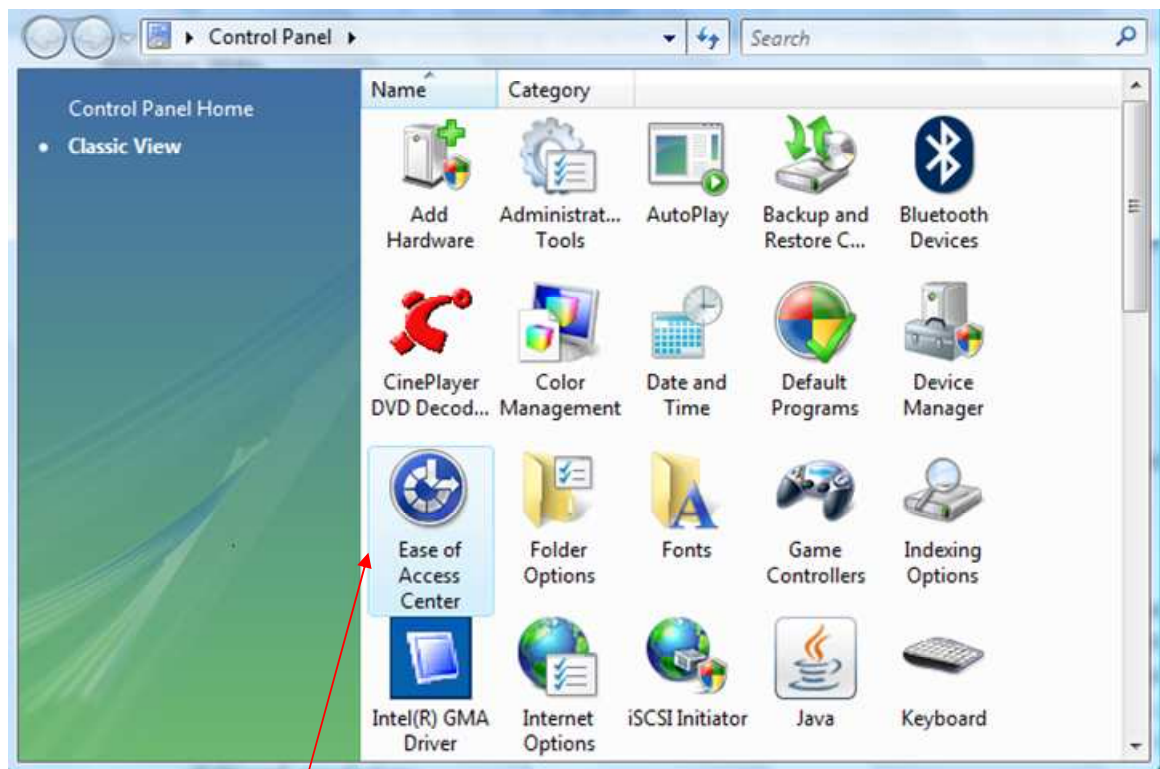
- AAC Keys.
- SKEYS from Eyegaze.

Apart from SerialKeys, the accessibility features that existed in Windows XP have been preserved in Windows Vista with some new additions.

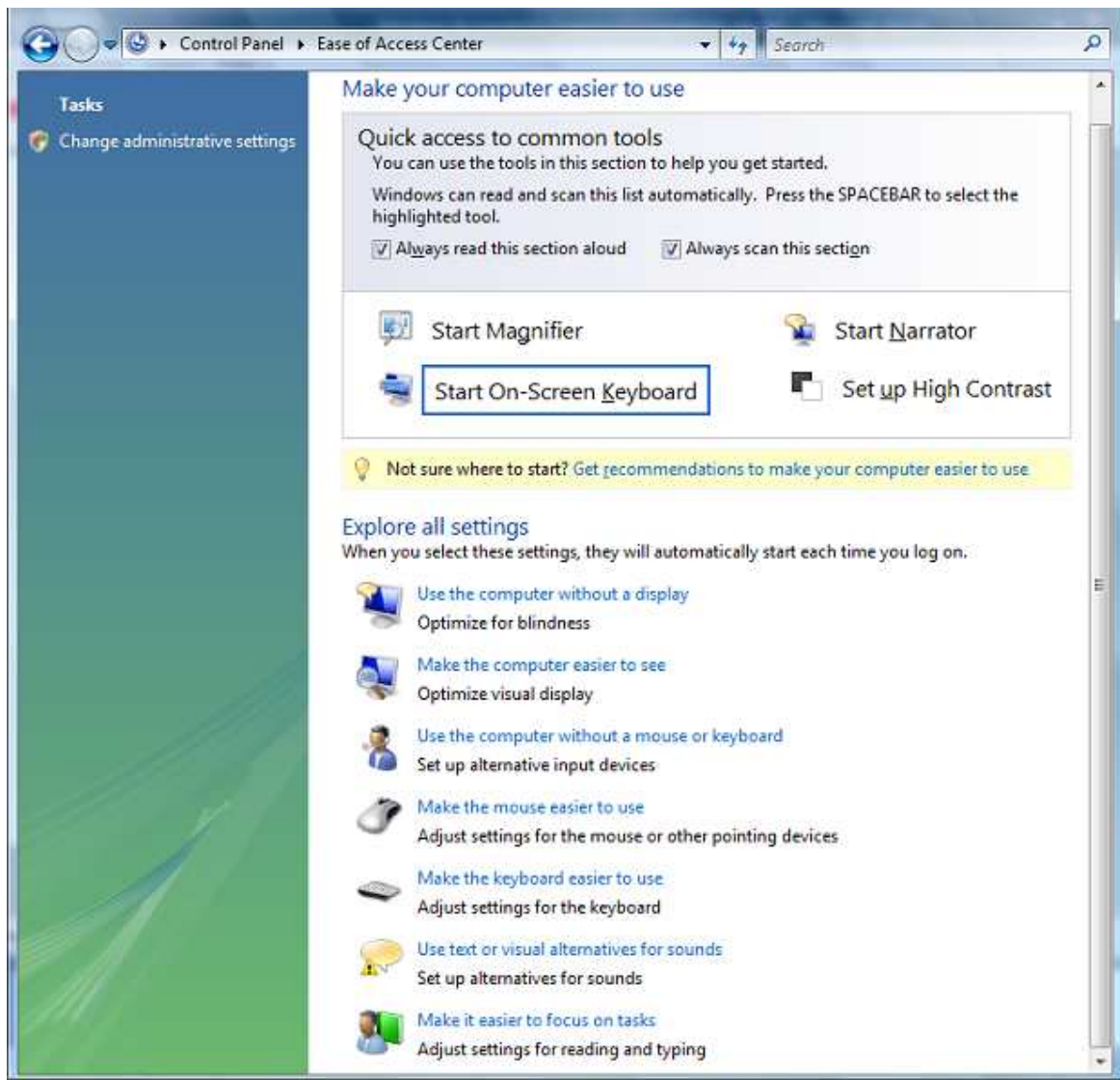
### Overview of Accessibility Features in Windows Vista:

#### 1. Ease of Access Centre

A centralised location where accessibility settings can be adjusted and accessibility programmes can be managed. The “Ease of Access Centre” icon can be found in the Control Panel:



Double-click on the “Ease of Access Centre” icon to display the following screen:



Now you have a number of options:

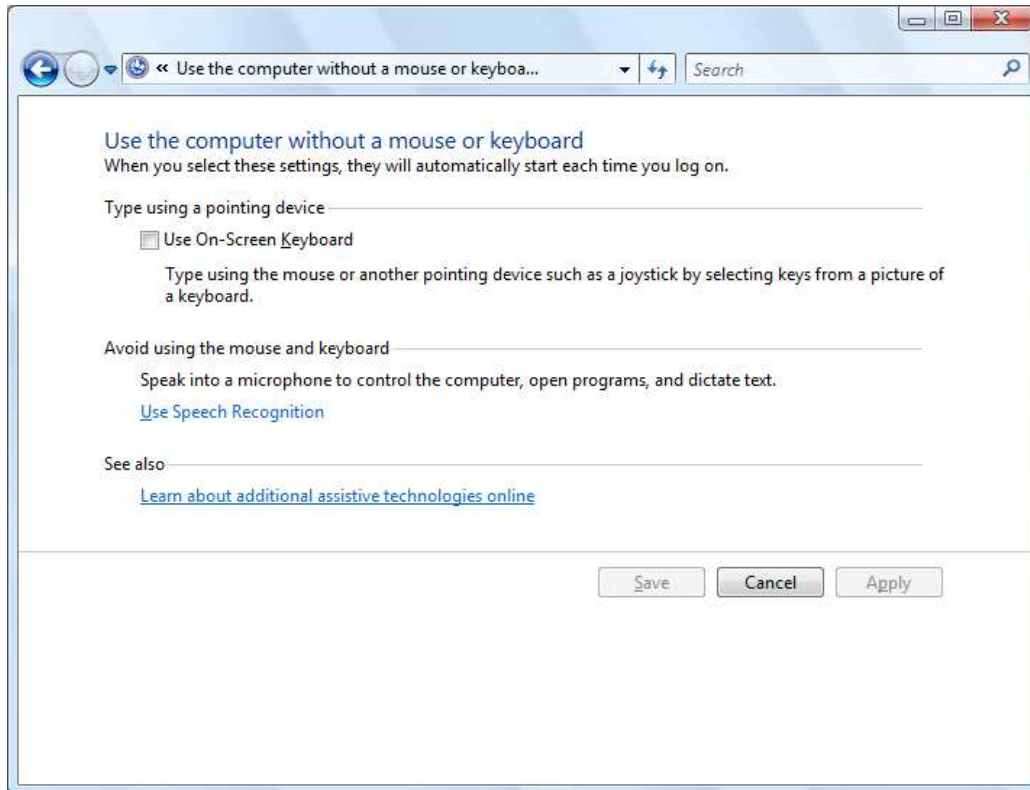
- Quick access to start common accessibility tools e.g. “Start Magnifier”, “Start Narrator”, “Start On-Screen Keyboard” and “Set-up High Contrast”.
- Obtain recommended settings based on answers to questions by clicking on “Get recommendations to make your computer easier to use”.
- Explore settings by category – “Explore all settings”.

In general, the Ease of Access Centre is easier to use than Accessibility Wizard - the Windows XP version.

## 2. Speech Recognition

This feature is not available in Windows XP. It is the ability to interact with the computer using only your voice, significantly reducing the use of a mouse and a keyboard. Documents and e-mail can be dictated, the Web can be browsed, and programs can be commanded using only speech. Interactive training guides you through an easy setup process and familiarises you with the voice commands. Recognition accuracy improves with each use as it adapts to your speaking style and vocabulary.

In order to activate Speech Recognition, click on “Use the computer without a mouse or keyboard” under “Explore all settings” in the “Ease of Access Centre” and then click on “Use Speech Recognition and follow the prompts:



### 3. Magnifier (from the Quick Access link)

Magnifier can be used to enlarge a portion of the screen to make things easier to see. A magnification level from 2 to 16 times the original can be chosen and also you can choose to track the mouse, the keyboard, or text editing.

### 4. Narrator (from the Quick Access link)

A text-to-speech program that reads aloud on-screen text and describes some events (such as error messages) that happen while you're using the computer. Narrator in Windows Vista now reads Narrator menus without leaving the active window and has a natural sounding voice.

### 5. Captions

Turn on text captions for animations and video. Many programs use sound in animation and video, and others use sounds to indicate that activity is happening on your computer (such as when a document starts or finishes printing). Some of these programs provide text captions as rough equivalents for the audio information. Using this option you can see the visual equivalents when sounds play (only available when media authors have provided this information).

The “Captions” features can be found by clicking on “Use text or visual alternatives for sounds”.

## **6. On-Screen Keyboard (from the “Keyboard” Quick Access link)**

A visual, on-screen keyboard with all the standard keys that you can use instead of a physical keyboard. On-Screen Keyboard lets you type and interact with your computer using an alternative input device like a switch, rather than the physical keyboard. You can also select keys using the mouse or another pointing device.

## **7. Mouse Keys**

Instead of using the mouse, you can use the arrow keys on the numeric keypad to move the pointer. Also you can change the colour and size of the mouse pointers.

The “Mouse Keys” features can be found by clicking on “Make the mouse easier to use”.

## **8. Keyboard Shortcuts (from the “Keyboard” Quick Access link)**

Use keyboard shortcuts as an alternative to the mouse. Keyboard shortcuts can make it easier to interact with your computer. With keyboard shortcuts, you don't need to use the mouse as often.

## **9. Sticky Keys**

Instead of having to press multiple keys at once (such as when you press the Ctrl, Alt, and Delete keys simultaneously to log on to Windows), you can press one key at a time when Sticky Keys is turned on.

The “Sticky Keys” features can be found by clicking on “Make the keyboard easier to use” or “Make it easier to focus on tasks”.

## **10. Filter Keys**

When Filter Keys is turned on keystrokes that occur in rapid succession and keystrokes that are held down for several seconds unintentionally are ignored.

The “Filter Keys” features can be found by clicking on “Make the keyboard easier to use” or “Make it easier to focus on tasks”.

## **11. Toggle Keys**

When Toggle Keys is turned on, tones are heard when the CAPS LOCK, NUM LOCK and SCROLL LOCK keys are pressed.

The “Toggle Keys” features can be found by clicking on “Make the keyboard easier to use” or “Make it easier to focus on tasks”.

## **12. Visual Notification**

System sounds are replaced with visual cues, such as a flash on the screen, so system alerts are announced with visual notifications instead of sounds.

The “Visual Notification” features can be found by clicking on “Use text or visual alternatives for sounds”.

Taken from [www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com)

See also the great range of AbilityNet Skillsheets [www.abilitynet.org.uk/pub\\_skillsheets](http://www.abilitynet.org.uk/pub_skillsheets)