TalkBack Testing Cheat Sheet

A free 3-page guide from KHY Labs. It shows you how to test any website or Android app using TalkBack, the screen reader that comes built into Android phones.

Before you start

Set up your way out before you turn TalkBack on. Most beginners panic when the phone stops responding to normal taps.

1. **Turn on the shortcut.** Settings > Accessibility > TalkBack > TalkBack shortcut. Now holding both volume keys for about 3 seconds turns TalkBack on or off.
2. **Slow it down.** TalkBack settings > Text-to-speech settings > Speech rate. A slower voice is easier to follow while you test.
3. **Try the tutorial once.** TalkBack settings > Tutorial and help. It takes about 10 minutes.
4. **Test in Chrome** for websites. It's the browser most TalkBack users use.

Stuck? Hold both volume keys for 3 seconds. Or say "Hey Google, turn off TalkBack." Menus and wording vary a little by phone brand and TalkBack version.

The gestures you need

Ten gestures cover almost every test. With TalkBack on, one-finger swipes move between items, and scrolling takes two fingers.

To do this	Gesture
Hear what's under your finger	Drag one finger across the screen
Next item	Swipe right
Previous item	Swipe left
Activate (tap) the item	Double-tap anywhere
Scroll	Two-finger swipe up or down
Change what swipes jump by (headings, links, controls)	Swipe up then down, or three-finger swipe down
Jump to the next heading, link or control	Swipe down

To do this	Gesture
Go back	Swipe down then left
Pause or resume speech	Two-finger tap
Open the TalkBack menu (Read from top, and more)	Three-finger tap, or swipe down then right

Gestures are for TalkBack 9.1 and up, from Google's TalkBack gestures help. Three-finger gestures don't work on every phone.

A 5-minute test

Pick one task a real person would do, like signing up or paying. Then do it with your eyes closed, or with the screen dimmed.

1. **Swipe through the whole screen, top to bottom.** Every item should say what it is ("Pay $24"), what kind of thing it is ("button") and its state ("checked", "expanded").
2. **Listen to the order.** It should match the order you'd read the screen. Nothing important should be skipped.
3. **Jump by headings.** Change the swipe to headings and swipe down. The headings alone should tell you how the page is laid out.
4. **Fill in a form.** Each field should say its label ("Email"), not just "edit box". Required fields should say so.
5. **Make a mistake on purpose.** Leave a field empty and submit. You should hear the error, without hunting for it.
6. **Open and close a pop-up or menu.** Focus should move into it, and back to where you were when it closes.
7. **Finish the task.** If you can't complete it by listening alone, that's your most important bug.

What broken sounds like

These are the problems you'll hear most. The WCAG rule is what to name in a bug report.

You hear	What's wrong	WCAG rule
"Button" or "Unlabeled, button"	An icon button has no name	4.1.2 Name, Role, Value
"Image" or a file name like "img_2041"	An image has no useful text alternative	1.1.1 Non-text Content
"Edit box" with no label	A form field has no label	3.3.2 Labels or Instructions
Prices or details run together, or read out of order	The layout isn't in the code, only in how it looks	1.3.1 Info and Relationships
Nothing, after you submit with a mistake	The error isn't announced	3.3.1 Error Identification, 4.1.3 Status Messages
A switch or checkbox with no "on", "off" or "checked"	The state isn't announced	4.1.2 Name, Role, Value
Focus jumps to the top, or gets stuck behind a pop-up	Focus isn't managed	2.4.3 Focus Order
"Click here" or "Read more", again and again	Links don't say where they go	2.4.4 Link Purpose

Want a full check?

KHY Labs offers a $90 three-hour manual audit with TalkBack, VoiceOver and keyboard testing, for up to 3 web pages or app screens. You get a written report with a screenshot of each problem and how to fix it. Book at khylabs.dev.

This sheet helps you find common problems. It isn't legal advice and doesn't certify that a site or app meets any law or standard.

Sources

- Use TalkBack gestures, Android Accessibility Help
- Turn off TalkBack, Android Accessibility Help