

ZoomText Express—A Review

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ZoomText Express is described by its developer, AI Squared (<http://www.aisquared.com>), as “an affordable and easy to use magnification program for your computer.”

It certainly is easy to use, especially compared to the “magnifier” feature supplied with the Windows XP® operating system. And I am not alone in this opinion. Connect to this [Screen Magnification](#) article (scroll down to the 7th paragraph) on the [National Federation of the Blind](#) web site.

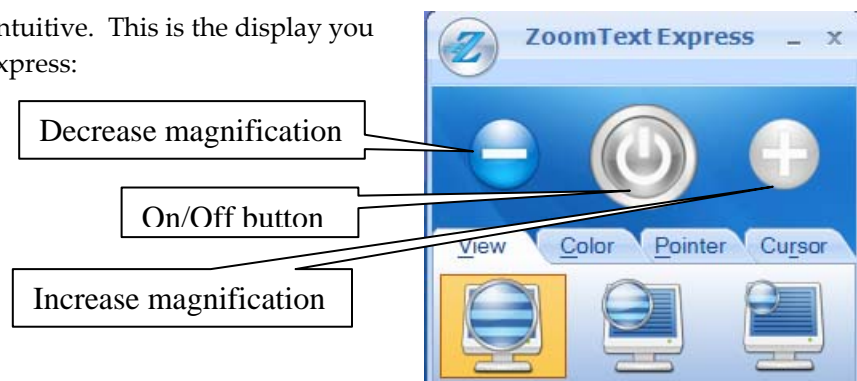
I have a few of my own comments to offer, but before I do that, I need to tell you:

1. An evaluation copy of the software was provided to Front Range PC Users Group (FRPCUG) at no charge, through a program sponsored by the Association of PC Users Groups (APCUG).
2. About a year ago, I reviewed an earlier version of this software, ZoomWare, also provided at no charge. That review is available at http://frpcug.org/reviews/zoomware_review.pdf.
3. I installed ZoomText Express on a Dell Inspiron 6000 with a 1.5 GHz Pentium M processor, 2 GB of RAM, and Windows XP SP3.

I consider it important for potential users of this program to understand the market this software is intended to serve (as I understand it). This software is **not** intended to compete with the much more capable (and much more expensive) applications for the blind or visually impaired—and the developer makes no such claim. For computer users that need a little magnification, and/or an easy way to change colors on a computer display for easy reading, ZoomText Express can provide a solution.

After you install the program, when you first open it, it opens with maximum magnification. In fact, that is my one criticism, since I believe (I have no data to back up my belief) that this is (or can be) confusing to first time users—especially for novice computer users.

However, the controls are very intuitive. This is the display you see when you open ZoomText Express:



The four tabs provide access to other controls. For example, take a look at the View tab:

There are 3 viewing choices:

- Full
- Large Lens
- Small Lens

Each of the “Lens” options creates a magnifying rectangle (large or small) on the display, which moves with the mouse.



The Full view applies the selected magnification level (there are 4 levels) to the entire display. This view can actually be very helpful, provided that you understand that you may have to move the mouse to see a scrollbar. I prefer the Full view—I find it less distracting.

The other 3 tabs provide enhancements that may help with other eye conditions, although AI Squared only claims that they can reduce glare and eyestrain.

The color tab provides 3 choices:

- Normal
- Reverse Video (“reverses all colors on the screen”)
- Tint (“applies a soft tint to the white areas of the screen”)

The Pointer tab provides 3 choices that allow you to change the size and color (“...a variety of high contrast colors”) of the pointer.

The Cursor tab allows you to “enhance” the cursor. For example:

Note the triangles above and below the cursor:



Combining these features can make the computing experience a lot more pleasant. In fact, for new or inexperienced computer users who also have some mild visual impairment, a program such as ZoomText Express may be the necessary stimulus to use the computer where they would not otherwise do so.

The advantage (especially for novice computer users) to using a program such as ZoomText Express is that a consistent magnification level can be applied to any application. True, in today’s world, many (perhaps most) applications provide a feature to change the magnification or zoom level. However, each application’s magnification feature works slightly differently. I had the opportunity to observe an inexperienced computer user use this program (using Full screen magnification, which he preferred). It

worked well, although this type of user needs to develop experience with moving the mouse to see different parts of the display. Even for the experienced computer user, consistency of magnification offers at least a possible productivity enhancement.

Since my review of ZoomWare in 2008, the user interface in ZoomText Express has been subtly but effectively improved. This is truly an easy program to use. I compared it to the "magnifier" included with the Windows XP operating system. I find the Windows magnifier virtually unusable.

My evaluation of ZoomText Express is much more positive than my evaluation of ZoomWare. With the improved user interface and a much lower price, for \$50, you can add very useful capability to your computer. Out of curiosity, I used Google® to search for "free screen magnification software." To my surprise, I found very little, and nothing with equivalent capabilities. So that \$50 is a very good price (in my opinion) for a very easy to use and very useful piece of software.