# April 1 BT Speak Release Notes

Blazie Technologies is pleased to release our third update for 2025. In addition to improvements to the editor, we have added a Wikipedia search tool and a second dictionary in traditional mode. We have added a simpler way to access some Thunderbird features, allowing you to compose email in traditional mode with the option of using contracted Braille. We have also added a menu search feature, making it quicker and easier to find what you want to access. Keep reading to learn about all of the new features and enhancements we’ve added!

A copy of these release notes and the latest editor help file are also available from your home directory.

## Quick Instructions for Updating Your BT Speak

1. Ensure that your BT Speak is connected to a Wi-Fi network and that your battery level is at 40% or higher.
2. Type O-Chord for the Options menu.
3. Type O for Operating System.
4. Type S for System Administration.
5. Type U for Upgrade the System.
6. Your BT Speak should tell you that a new update is available and will ask if you’d like to install it. Press the letter Y to begin the installation.
7. The BT Speak will download and install the update, and the machine will restart.

## Menu Search

With so many menu items available in BT Speak, we can appreciate that it might sometimes take a while to find a specific choice. With this in mind, we have added the ability to search for items from the options menu or any of its submenus.

You can access this feature in a few different ways:

You can press O-chord to open the Options menu. As before, the first item is Help. Immediately following Help is a new option labelled “Search Menus, shortcut is / (slash).”

The slash shortcut means that you could also press O-chord followed by the slash key (dots 3-4) to begin a menu search. When menu search is opened, BT Speak says, “enter search text.” A second later, you will hear BT Speak follow up with, “h-chord for help.”

As an example, suppose that you are looking for the command to open the agenda calendar but you don’t remember in which submenu the command resides. Once menu search opens, type “calendar” without the quotes. As you continue to type your search term, you will be told how many matches are found. For example, after typing the word calendar, you might hear “15 matches”, meaning that BT Speak has found 15 menu items with the word “calendar” in their names.

Press dot 4-chord to move down through the list of results or dot 1-chord to move up through the list. When you hear the item that you want to open, press Enter.

As you move through the list of results, you will hear the name of the item, followed by its respective location, such as “add an entry in calendar menu.”

Note: you can also enter a search term when you first open a menu and BT Speak announces the menu’s name. As an example, if you press O-chord, followed by s, BT Speak says, “Settings menu, open.” At this point, you may press enter or slash and type a search term, and BT Speak will provide a list of results.

In fact, from anywhere in a menu you can press / (dots 3-4) and you will be prompted for your search.

## Changes and Additions to the Editor

### New Commands

 We have added new Chords for some editor commands which we hope are easier to remember:

* Cut Line: C-7-Chord, same as X-Chord with dot 8. Control+K can also be used for this command. If you have not set a mark, this command cuts the line of text to which the cursor is pointing. This way, you can easily cut a line of text with just one command and paste it somewhere else in the same file or in a completely different file. The quickest way to paste text from the clipboard is to press dots 3-4-6-chord.
Note that C-Chord with dot 7 is also available inside any BT Speak input prompt, and when pressed, anything you've typed before will be cleared. In the editor, if a mark has been set, this command cuts the text from the position of the mark to the cursor and places that text into the clipboard.
* Save as or save selection: S-8-Chord -, same as Control O
* Open File: O-8-Chord: same as Control-R
* Cut to End of File: dots 4-5-6-7-Chord. You can also press dot 8 with T to perform this task.
* We have added the select all command, which is L-8-Chord (dots 1-2-3-8-chord). It is also available in the Delete Menu, with the letter A for its keyboard shortcut. The Select All command places the mark at the top of the document and your cursor at the bottom of the text.

### Other Editor Improvements

* File Move: You can now Use J-Chord with dot 7 or J-Chord along with dot 8 to push the currently open file backward or forward in the list of open files, exchanging it with its next or previous neighbor. This lets you reorder/number open files as desired.
* We added W-chord as a quick way to switch to the previously opened file. This allows you to switch back and forth between the last two visited files. For efficiency’s sake, BT Speak announces only the file name (and not its full path). You can also press J-chord followed by enter to switch to the last visited file, as well. This is like the Braille ‘n Speak’s OU-Chord feature.
* When creating a new Quick note, BT Speak no longer says “file saved.”
* After closing a file, the user is now placed in the file that was to the left (instead of to the right). If you create a new file, and then close it, you are placed back where you started. If you close file 1, you are placed in the last file in the list.
* To provide certainty and confidence when writing text in the editor, we have changed the behavior of cursor movement when navigating between lines with dot 1-Chord and dot 4-Chord. Previously, your active column (how far your cursor was from the start of the line) was preserved, even after moving past a blank line. Now, it always resets by moving the cursor to the beginning of the line.

Note, this new behavior is enabled by default but it can be disabled in the .nanorc file by setting or unsetting the “resetcolumnonmove” flag.

To disable it and keep the active column in tact as you navigate across lines, type:

unset resetcolumnonmove

## Wikipedia Has Been Added to Traditional Mode

You can now search for and read articles from Wikipedia in traditional mode.

From the Options menu, go to Applications, Reference Applications, Wikipedia (shortcut key is P).

Once the Wikipedia application opens, you will hear BT Speak prompt, “search query.” Type a search term, followed by Enter.

You will then be placed on a list of articles which matched your search. Press dot 4-chord to move down or dot 1-chord to move up. Press Enter to select an article.

You will then be placed on a list of sections for the article you chose. Choose the section that you would like to read by navigating through the list using dot 4-chord to move down and dot 1-chord to move back up through the list. Pressing enter opens the section. You can use text navigation commands to read the text of the article, including dots 1-2-4-5-6-chord to read continuously.

Pressing Z-chord closes the section you were reading. Repeated presses of Z-chord continue to move back one level through the menus.

You can also specify which language Wikipedia uses to display information. To change the language, open the Options menu, followed by Settings, and Wikipedia Language. From here, you may review the supported languages using dot 4-chord to move down and dot 1-chord to move up. Press Enter to choose your desired language.

## Another Dictionary, Wiktionary, Has Been Added

Wiktionary has been added to the Reference Applications menu. It functions similarly to the existing dictionary but it offers a much more comprehensive database. It also includes two new word information categories: Etymology (found below the meanings for each part of speech) and Relationships. Relationships include synonyms, antonyms and more. They are accessed by pressing enter on one of the definitions.

Wiktionary is a multilingual dictionary supporting nearly 100 languages, though BT Speak only supports English at this time. We hope to enable more languages in future updates.

To open the Wiktionary application, go to Options, Applications, Reference Applications, Wiktionary (shortcut key is I).

BT Speak announces “word”. Type the word that you want a definition for, followed by Enter.

Once the definition has been found, you will hear “x meanings found” where X is the number of definitions.

As you navigate through the results, you may press enter to view more details about the selected definition.

## Simplified Thunderbird Access Has Been Added to Traditional Mode

Traditional Mode now includes options that make it easier to use the Thunderbird email program. You can find these options by going to Options, Applications, Web Applications, Thunderbird. Below we will provide a brief overview of all of the options found in the Thunderbird menu. Please refer to the Thunderbird help topic (Located in Options, Help) for full details.

Note: You must first set up an email account in the Thunderbird program for many of these features to work properly. From desktop mode, you can open Thunderbird by pressing O-chord for the Applications menu. Next, open the Internet menu and choose Thunderbird from the list of available applications. If you have not used Thunderbird previously, it will walk you through setting up your email account. Please see the BT Speak user’s manual for additional details.

### Open Thunderbird: Shortcut is O

Open Thunderbird- launches the full Thunderbird program in desktop mode.

### Compose Email: Shortcut is C

Compose email- lets you draft an email either by typing a message or by using a prewritten file. You are free to compose your message using either computer or literary Braille.

When you activate this option, BT Speak says, “send to.”

Type the recipient’s email address, followed by Enter.

Next, BT Speak says, “cc” for carbon copy. You can optionally input a second email address. You are also free to skip this option and press Enter to move to the next field.

BT Speak says, “BCC” for blind carbon copy. Like the CC field, you can either type an email address or skip this step by pressing Enter.

BT Speak says, “subject?” Type a subject for your message, followed by Enter.

You will be placed in a menu related to how you wish to write the text (or body) of your email. The menu has two choices: “From File” and “Quick Message”.

Selecting the “From File” option allows you to choose a text file that you already have in your BT Speak. You will first be placed within a list of your BT Speak’s directories. Once you choose the directory of interest, press Enter. You will then be placed within a list of possible files. Use dot 1-chord and dot 4-chord to navigate through the files, followed by Enter.

The “Quick Message” option opens a file where you can type the text of your email message. As with other input prompts in BT Speak, press dots 5-6-chord to use literary Braille, or press dots 2-3-chord for Computer Braille.

After typing your email, press Enter. BT Speak will ask, “include an attachment?” If you type Y for yes, you will be in a list of folders that you can choose. Once you select a folder by moving to it and pressing Enter, you will then be in a list of files that you can attach. Select the file that you want to attach, press Enter. You will then be taken to the Thunderbird application where you can type X-chord, Enter to send your message.

###  More Options and Additional Information

From the Thunderbird menu, Inbox opens your Thunderbird inbox

Address Book opens your Thunderbird address book

It's logical to wonder why features like viewing, replying, or forwarding messages are not included. These actions rely on the IMAP protocol, which requires a persistent connection to your email server to retrieve and update messages in real-time, a feature not currently supported in Traditional mode. By contrast, the options we introduced here interact directly with Thunderbird itself, without requiring any direct access to your email account.

## More Audio Demos and Walk-Throughs Available in the Help Menu

In the Help menu under Guides and Tutorials, we have added a new category called Audio Demos and Walk-Throughs, with the letter A being the shortcut. Currently, it contains two recordings. The first is Updates to the Editor and the other recording is called AI Chat Audio Demo. We hope you find these presentations valuable. We intend to add more demos and guides to this category in future updates.

## Simon Has Been Added to the Games Menu

If you open Options, Applications, Games, you will find a new game called Simon. It is similar to the Simon games that were available decades ago (minus the lights). This game behaves similarly to the Simon game which some people might remember from the Braille ‘n Speak.

The game uses four different keys, dot 1, 3,4 and 6, with each key producing a different musical note. When you first open the game, you will be asked if you would like to learn the keys before starting. If you type Y for yes, you can press dot 1, 3, 4 or 6 separately to hear the note produced by each of the keys.

When you’re ready to start playing the game, press either the letter Q or Z-chord.

Simon starts out by playing one of the four musical notes. Your task is to press the correct key associated with that note. If you press the correct key, Simon then plays the same note but adds a second one. You have to press the correct keys in sequence, with Simon adding an additional key to the notes with every sequence that you match correctly.

Simon was written in Python by Ken Perry. Modifications were contributed by Steve Clower and Stephen Blazie.

Enjoy.

## Improvements to PhoneBook

* When you load your contacts, BT Speak now provides more information and status feedback to let you know that your contacts are loading.
* When editing contact information, such as a name or phone number, the previously written information is still available in the edit field. This will allow you to correct or edit the existing information without having to retype it again from the beginning.

## New Options for Updating Desktop Applications

We know that many customers would like to update the desktop applications which come preinstalled with BT Speak, such as Firefox, Thunderbird, etc. While it has always been possible to do this, it required either using the Update Manager in desktop mode or going into a terminal. In our mission to provide you with more control over your BT Speak without needless complexity, we have added a convenient set of menu items accessible from Traditional Mode to allow you to update these packages whenever you wish.

To update these desktop packages, go to Options, Operating System, System Administration, Check for Package Updates, with P being the shortcut for this new menu item.

This menu provides items for updating the following applications: Firefox, Thunderbird, LibreOffice and Chromium. The last choice found in this menu is All Installed Packages. Selecting this item updates all of the previously listed applications along with all other installed system software on your device. Once you make a selection, press Enter. You will hear BT Speak announce status updates as it downloads, unpacks, and installs the updates. The update process may take several minutes to complete depending on the number of updates you selected and the speed of your internet connection.

Note: if you have previously uninstalled one of the afore-mentioned packages, you will not see it in the list of available updates.

## Improvements to the Calculator

* You no longer need to press Enter after hearing a result to begin typing another expression. This should make using the calculator more efficient.
* Expressions like 2/1 would often times produce a result with multiple decimal places, such as 1.000000. Now, if the result evaluates to a whole number, the calculator shows it and omits the trailing decimals.
* If an expression begins with an operation, such as plus, minus, multiplication, or division, the calculator presumes that you wish to act on the previous result. For example, if you write 10+10 on one line, followed by /5 on the next, the calculator will return 4. This is because /5 is added to the previous result, which was 20.
* We now have a Clear command. Dots 3-5-6-Chord will clear the previous result, along with the active expression. When pressed, BT Speak says, “clear.” Users of Blazie Engineering products may remember that this is the same command that was used to clear numbers in the calculator for those products.
* We added CTRL+R (R with dots 7-8) to repeat the previous result.
* We added CTRL+P (P with dots 7-8) to set precision (or scale). This is used for setting the number of decimal places shown in the result of a calculation.
* We improved the accuracy of the Pi constant, particularly when decimal precision was set to a low number.

## Backing Up and Restoring Your Settings

AN option to backup and restore your BT Speak settings has been added. You can find this in Options, Operating System, System Administration, Backup BT Speak Settings, with K being the shortcut.

When you create a backup, your BT speak settings along with your user BTSpeak directory (containing your user menu, radio station presets, voice recordings, and so on) are compressed and placed into a file named btspeak-backup-yy-mm-dd.tar.gz (where yyyy represents the year, mm the month, and dd the day). The archive is placed in your “Public” directory where it may be conveniently copied elsewhere for safe keeping.

In the same menu, you will also find the option Restore BT Speak Settings, with E being the shortcut.

When restoring a backup, the BT Speak searches for archives in your home and public directories, along with any connected external storage and presents whatever it finds in a list. Select the archive of your choosing and press Enter to have its content copied back into your device.

Finally, you will be asked if you wish to reload your settings. In most cases, you may answer yes. However, if you know you have settings which require certain packages to be installed (such as a TTS engine), we advise you to answer no and verify your required packages are present first.

## New Command to Speak the Status of the Stopwatch and Countdown Timer

A new command has been added to speak the status of the stopwatch and countdown timer: dots 3-4-5-6-8-Chord, or number sign chord with dot 8. This is a global command, meaning that it can be used anywhere, including while in a file or in desktop mode.

## Delete an Item From the User Menu

In the user menu, you can now delete any menu items you previously added. To do this, point to an item that you want to delete and press dots 2-5-6-chord (low D). This is the same chord command used to delete the current character in a file.

After pressing dots 2-5-6-chord, BT Speak says “delete this menu item?” Press Y or N.

## Support for Opening More Compressed Archive Formats

We added support for unpacking additional archive types. While the BT Speak has been able to open .zip and .tgz files, we now support the following file types: tar.gz, .gz, .tar.bz2, .bz2, .tar.xz, .xz, .tar.zst, .zst, .7z and .rar.

We also added support for mixed case in these extensions, as well as in audio files and in other places. Archives are unpacked by pressing enter on these files from the file browser.

## Audio Reset Command Enhancements

In the March update, the audio reset command (dots 2-3-5-6-7-8-Chord) was enhanced to restart the PulseAudio service. However, if you want to restart PulseAudio but leave your volume and text-to-speech settings unchanged, you can now do so by accessing the "Restart Audio Service" item from Options, Settings, Audio. The menu item is “Restart Audio Service”, with I being the shortcut. This option not only resets the audio service but it also reloads the screen reader and speech synthesizer. Each item takes some time to cycle. As a result, after selecting this option, there will be nearly 20 seconds of silence until speech returns. You may find this command useful if you use a USB Audio adaptor, as it can often re-enable the device if it stops working.

## Miscellaneous Changes and Improvements

* In Options, Operating System, System Administration, we renamed the menu item "Upgrade the System” to “Check for Updates”. The keyboard shortcut is still the letter U.
* In Options, Operating System, “About This Device” has been renamed to “About This BT Speak.” The new shortcut key is A (for About).
* In Options, Operating System, System Administration, the menu item “Customize This Device” has been renamed to “Customize This BT Speak.” C is still the shortcut key.
* In Options, Operating System, System Administration, Advanced System Administration, the menu item “Upgrade System” has been renamed to “Update System Selectively”.
* To avoid shortcut key conflicts, we changed the keyboard shortcut for the Status Indicator option in the Settings menu from S to I.
* When pressing dots 3-4-6 from the file browser to move or copy a file, we changed the wording of what BT Speak asks about the files you plan to move or copy to make things easier to understand. It now asks, “do you want to delete the selected file(s) after it has been copied?” Pressing Y deletes the file from its original source after it is copied to the chosen destination. In other words, the file is moved from one place to another place. If you answer N for No, the original file remains intact with a duplicate placed in your destination directory.
* We fixed a bug where the wrong buffer number was sometimes announced when closing a file
* Commands issued from the editor’s Delete, Edit, Navigation and Paste menus should no longer cause BT Speak to announce spurious messages.
* The “file saved” message is now spoken only when you explicitly elect to save your file. Automatic save operations (such as when entering the Options menu) are now silent.
* It is no longer possible to install both RH Voice and Voxin (Vocalizer) from the BT Speak's TTS Manager. If you try to install RH Voice while Voxin is installed, you will be presented with a message telling you to uninstall Voxin first. The same is also true if you want to install Voxin when RH Voice is detected. While we dislike having to make such a change, the presence of both engines has been known to cause audio instability with the Speech Dispatcher driver. You may continue to install them manually through the Debian package manager if desired, and if both already exist, the BT Speak will leave them as is.
* We fixed a bug where the letter D was not being pronounced phonetically as “delta”.
* We removed the introductory note which was embedded into the title of the Bluetooth menu.
* We removed the - (dash) from the word “WiFi” for better Voxin Vocalizer pronunciation in menus and utilities
* When using find and replace, we fixed a bug where the message “Misplaced Cursor” was sometimes being reported.
* In Voice Notes, recordings should no longer provide corrupted audio if the RH Voice speech engine is installed.
* When entering numbers in the countdown timer, you can now set your prompt input mode to use Computer Braille or literary Braille, just as you can in other areas of the BT Speak. Dots 5-6-chord sets input mode to literary Braille, and dots 2-3-chord sets input mode to Computer Braille.
* When entering information in the countdown timer, you can now cancel the operation by pressing Z-Chord at any point while being asked for minutes or seconds.
* The Firefox Web browser has been updated to address an expired key issue.
* Localization for the German language has been updated.

## Concluding Remarks

We hope you enjoy the new features and improvements in this latest update. We welcome your input regarding these changes, as well as future enhancements you’d like to see in the BT Speak. Many of the enhancements and features in this update come directly from feedback and requests that you have given us. Your input is the driving force behind our continuous innovation and improvement.

You can email feedback to us at info@blazie.net or call us at (772) 214-1616.

The Blazie Technologies Team