# The most accessible big screen TVs

# Video transcript

(inspirational music)

**Audio montage:** The latest tech... I'm Alexa, I can answer your questions. Interviews- And we are evolving and we are seeing an amazing opportunity that's happening. Accessibility: Accessibility is one of the core values.

**Voiceover:** This is doubletap TV.

**Marc Aflalo:** Welcome to this edition of doubletap TV. Thank you guys so much for being here each and every single week.

If you want to get in touch with us the email address is **feedback@ami.ca** or you can drop us a message on Twitter. It is @DoubleTapCanada and use the hashtag which is AskDoubleTap.

By my side, as he is each and every single week, doubletap TV's Co-host Steven Scott.

Steven, this week we answering one of the most common questions blind people are asked about television.

Steven, how do blind people watch TV?

**Steven Scott:** Do you know, Marc, it sounds like a really odd question to ask, doesn't it? But you're right. I've lost count of the times that I've been asked that question.

In fact, the last time I bought a TV in a store, I was asked why I wanted a big TV, you know, 'cause I can't see it.

So to him and (Steven chuckling) anyone else who wonders that question? Well, here is the answer. Firstly, I don't live alone. My wife and I have a visual impairment, but we can still see a little bit.

And even though we don't get a huge amount of joy out of TV, we still like to use it, our vision as much as we can. What's left of our sight.

Also, believe it or not, we have friends who occasionally visit, although maybe not at the moment, granted. But, you know, they occasionally do. And I'm sure they probably don't want to enjoy Netflix on a speaker sitting in the corner.

**Marc Aflalo:** Okay. I'll buy that. It makes sense. Although I'm not really sure about the friends bit, but I'll believe you.

(both laughing)

You know, it's not a dumb question though, right? I mean, I know you could see a little bit, but how do you read what's on the screen? Like the menus, or the TV guide?

**Steven Scott:** Yeah, exactly. That's not a dumb question at all. In fact, it's the right question to ask.

So let me dive in to what I've got here because I've got the Sony XH95 model right next to me here in my studio, kindly sent to me by Sony in the UK.

Now as a huge 55-inch full led screen capable not only of 4K Ultra HD, but also the ability to push high dynamic range as well, for really clear and vivid images.

Which is brilliant if you are low-vision and you really need bright clear images in front of you.

It's one of those smart TVs as well. And I'll get into the detail on that.

It's powered by Android. And this is where things get rather interesting.

As it runs on Google's operating system it allows you two methods of setup.

The standard setup that you might expect on-screen using the bundled remote control. Which is fine if you can see what you're doing.

If you want to have a go at setting up on your own though, well you can use your Android phone. Not Apple.

Hmm. (Steven chuckling) We'll get to that a bit later.

But yeah, you can connect to the TV from your Android phone from the outset which will link your Google account and share your Wi-Fi with the TV.

Not really sure why iPhones can't do this, but, hey, why not?

You've gotta use Android and it is an Android phone and Android TV, so, okay, fine.

But you might still need a bit of sighted assistance because text to speech support is actually only available after initial setup.

Yeah, make sense of that.

But you know what, if you're on your own, use your, "Be My Eyes" app or use your Aira subscription, or just grab someone nearby in the house who's got working eyes to get you started.

And if you're an iPhone user, well, you will have to do this anyway for the entire setup.

Now in terms of the accessibility settings on this TV there are a couple of options.

For low-vision users there's the ability to increase the size of the text across the entire system, which helps you better read the screen's menus and guides. And that is how someone with low vision would be able to do that.

For those who are totally blind there is a screen reader built-in. Now this might get a little bit confusing, so bear with me on this.

Android users will know that the screen reader on Google's platform is, "TalkBack."

However, on Sony's own TV lineup here, it's called, "Screen Reader."

You'll find TalkBack as well, in there, but it's a separate app.

(Steven exhaling sharply) You still with me on this, Marc? (Steven chuckling)

**Mark Aflalo:** I'm following along. I promise you. (Steven chuckling). I am here.

**Steven Scott:** It's so bizarre. (Marc laughing) But once this TV is set up, here's the key thing.

You can turn on the screen reader using the accessibility shortcut on the remote control. It took me ages to find this.

It's actually the, "Mute," button. So, I'll save you a Google search. It's the mute button on your remote.

And once the screen reader is activated, which is really the only function of the accessibility shortcut, but you can change that later, a blind user can now take full control of the TV.

You can navigate the menus. Everything you see on screen, whether it be display, or screen information, or brightness level, all of that will be read back to you.

You can also adjust the speed of the voice as well, which is handy. And I will say... I've gotta say with the Sony screen reader, it's snappy, it's very reactive as well.

I've tried a number of these TVs in the past. They're generally pretty sluggish, slow to react. A bit like myself, to be honest.

But not the case here. It's a good voice as well. Not too verbose. Not giving you too much information, just what you need.

And I can know at least use most of the TV.

Now I say most.

Unfortunately, with smart TVs at the moment, blind users always hit a few barriers off the bat and the first of those is third-party applications.

Now, all smart TVs at the moment, some work and some don't.

Now while I can't speak to every single app out there on the platform, it's safe to say the majority don't, sadly.

Now for those using this TV with an aerial, you can turn on audio description. But on individual apps, like Netflix, et cetera, you have to manually turn it on unless you already preset it as a preferred language on another device, like an iPhone, or an Android phone.

Now, I mentioned TalkBack earlier.

That's the default screen reader on most of the Android devices. But as I also mentioned, that's not the case on Sony TVs. The option's there, but they've chosen to develop their own.

There is a difference between the two. And in my mind the Sony screen reader, as I say, is much snappier, much nicer voice, much more reactive.

TalkBack on the other hand, not so much. Bit more unresponsive, if I'm honest and it's not great.

The voice on Sony's is much nicer. TalkBack just feels a bit more verbose. You're getting a lot of beeps and clicks and not getting that instant reaction if you want.

Now, if you go for one of these models you can let us know which you think is best. You may prefer TalkBack over Sony's one. It's entirely up to you.

In conclusion, firstly I need to separate out the TV from the third party apps installed.

The TV itself is an absolute joy to use and the most responsive I've ever used with a screen reader built in. I'd say it's up there with Apple TV and it's voiceover accessibility.

The screen is bright, it's vivid with options for movie scenes, gaming and all of that.

The remote's sturdy. It even has a backlight built in to see the buttons in the dim light. Handy little feature. And the remote also has tactile dots to denote various buttons on it, like volume up and down and program up and down.

**Marc Aflalo:** Wow! Honestly. I honestly didn't realize how much was already baked into the TVs. And what's best is that everything's already there.

And even for someone who has vision, things like the larger text feature. I could see myself using that at times just to see what's on the screen because, you know, time to time it impossible to see what's there.

**Steven Scott:** Exactly, Marc. I mean Sony, aren't the only player in town, though.

Coming up, we'll have our co-host on doubletap Canada over an AMI audio. He's gonna be joining us. That's Shaun Preece to tell us about his thoughts on the new Samsung TV.

**Marc Aflalo:** And I'm gonna be talking about TCL TVs a bit later on as well.

So I'm gonna give you a little bit of a chance to catch your breath there because that was a little bit of a review. We're going to take a quick break.

It is doubletap TV. If you guys wanna get involved, it's feedback@ami.ca on Twitter, reach out @DoubleTapCanada and use that hashtag, which is AskDoubleTap.

Let us know what TVs you're using at home and what features you love the most. We'll take a quick break and come back with Shaun Preece.

(inspirational music)

**Voiceover:** Love doubletap TV? Listen to AMI-audio for doubletap Canada, every Thursday at 8:00 PM, Eastern for news and reviews on everything tech.

(inspirational music)

**Voiceover:** This is doubletap TV.

**Marc Aflalo:** Welcome back at doubletap TV. Thank you guys as always for being here.

If you're not already following us on Twitter go ahead and do that right now. We'll give you a couple seconds here.

It is, @doubletap Canada. And if you use the hashtag, askdoubletap whenever you tweet at us, we'll field the questions on an upcoming show.

And we've got really cool stuff coming down as we continue this exciting season of doubletap TV.

Of course, if you wanna email us it's, feedback@ami.ca.

I am Marc Aflalo, alongside me is a Steven Scott. And this week we're welcoming our co-host from doubletap Canada, which airs every Thursday at 8:00 PM Eastern on AMI-audio. His name is Shaun Preece.

**Steven Scott:** Hey Shaun, good to have you here with us on a doubletap TV this week. I mentioned having the Sony TV in the last segment, but we wanna talk about one of your TV's that you've got in the house and your feelings on accessibility. Firstly, welcome back to the show.

**Shaun Preece:** Well, of course I don't have the latest and greatest one, Steven. I'm not Mr. Steven Scott.

I've got a 2017 Samsung Series 8 TV and I've gotta say, I love it.

Accessibility makes all the difference. TV sort of went out of our life for a long time because it just wasn't accessible. It was a pain, both me and my partner are blind and yeah, just sort of moved away from TV.

But having accessibility back on the Samsung is great. And it's made a difference. The TV is part of family life again, which is, which is strange.

But, yeah. So, for me... As I said both me and my partner, our vision is at a level where really we need a screen reader to read the system menus, or the EPGs.

But if we go into the Samsung accessibility options there are other options there.

So, if you do have low vision, you are covered as well. So for example, things like the TV, "Settings menu." If you go into the accessibility options, of course you do also have, "High contrast," mode.

So it would be white text on a black background, or yellow text on a blue background. Again, it makes it far easier to see if you've got low vision.

So they're great as well. Aside from that, you can also make the text of the menus and also the text of program information, or the electronic program guide, you can make that far bigger as well. So you can change that to a large font.

So if you do have low vision there are options there, which is great.

Also, if you're hearing impaired there's accessibility features there for you.

Now, this isn't necessarily an accessibility feature, but there is Bluetooth connectivity. So you can take the audio from the TV and throw it out to a Bluetooth external speaker.

And of course, if you do have a Bluetooth-enabled hearing aid, you can connect it to that. So there is that feature as well, which actually I think is great. My mom is hearing impaired and every time she comes around, usually we gotta have the TV at such a level no one else can really bear it. So having that option is really good.

Moving on from that. And so the option that I really need and the option that I use all the time of course, is the screen reader.

Now, on Samsung the screen reader is called, "Voice guide," and it works really well.

It changes the whole thing (Steven chuckling) because I'm able to turn on the TV, and it sounds so simple, but turning on the TV and be able to flick through the channels and be told what program is on and what program is coming up next makes a huge difference.

Aside from that, it can also read the electronic program guide so I can browse through what's coming on TV later on today, or even through the week.

And depending on which version of the Samsung TV, of course you can also use your personal library. So you can set, you can set recording. So I want to record that TV program at that time and then you can browse through the library of the recordings you've made previously.

And of course all accessible. Fantastic. Makes a huge difference.

Now to enable the screen reader, it's not a massive procedure that you've gotta go through.

On my smart remote for the Samsung TV, simply hold down the, "Mute," or sorry, the, "Volume," button. Hold it down for a few seconds. And much like you would on an iPhone it and will come up with a shortcut accessibility menu. And you can turn on the voice guide from there.

Or you can hold down the, "Voice assistant," button on your Samsung remote and simply ask, "Turn on voice guide," and it will come on.

The voices aren't quite as great as, or quite as varied as you will find on other... On your Windows screen reader, or your smartphone screen reader, but they get the job done.

I love the Samsung TV. What more do I need to say?

**Marc Aflalo:** That is Shaun Preece, everybody, you can hear him alongside Steven Scott and myself, every Thursday at 8:00 PM, Eastern on AMI audio.

We've talked about Sony. We've talked about Samsung. We're gonna take a quick break and come back and talk about my favorite brand, which is TCL. Stick around.

**Voiceover:** For more great doubletap TV content, visit, ami.ca/doubletap.

(logo whooshes) (inspirational music)

**Voiceover:** This is doubletap TV.

**Marc Aflalo:** We're back on doubletap TV. Thank you guys so much for being here. I am Marc Aflalo alongside me, Steven Scott.

Steven, we've talked about Sony, we've talked about Samsung, but there's another brand that is becoming more and more popular in North America. And that brand is TCL.

I don't know if you've heard too much of TCL overseas, but they make some of the best, big screen TVs with a price point that I promise you cannot be beat.

And I'm here in my basement. I've changed venues. We've got some more natural light here. And this is one of the rooms in my home that has a TCL television.

Full disclosure, big fan of the company. I have a TCL TV in every single room in my house. The reason is, is because the cost point makes it so affordable.

Here we've got a 48-inch TCL television.

The cool thing about TCL TVs, and really all these smart TVs is, they're like big smartphones. They really run on their own operating system.

Some are Android based, some have Google's platform. Some even have the old Palm OS, which they call webOS now. But this one runs on the Roku platform.

Now, Steven, you and I have talked about Roku many a times. They make these great media players that allow you to download different apps, whether it's your Disney Plus app, your Netflix app, or any Amazon Prime.

Think of an app that you wanna download to your TV and use to make that smart TV more enjoyable, and it's built in into the actual Roku TVs and especially the TCL brand of Roku TVs.

Now they do make other TVs that have different platforms as well, but I'm focusing on the ones in my homes, which are all Roku-based.

Now the cool thing about the Roku TVs, other than being able to download the apps and enjoy everything, is that it actually is the operating system of the television.

So you can do things like, naming your input, whatever you want, customizing the icons, all the picture settings. And everything is very familiar especially if you've used Roku media players in the past.

I'm gonna reach back here and I'm gonna show you the remote that comes with all of these televisions.

It's a familiar Roku TV, media player-style remote. So you've got the up down left, right. But it's a small form factor.

Your volume is on the right-hand side of the remote along with your mute and all your controls are there, with even speedy controls that let you go to Netflix, CBS, Roku, even Google Play really quickly as shortcuts directly on the controller itself.

**Steven Scott:** Well, that's brilliant. I mean, I was talking earlier about the Sony remote. It's quite a big remote. It's quite a bulky remote, tons of buttons on there. Trying to find the right ones can be a bit of a challenge.

So the idea of having that really small, simple-to-use, easy-to-understand remote control, that can be really helpful.

**Marc Aflalo:** No, absolutely. I'm gonna actually turn this TV on for you, so we can kind of take a look through the interface together because it really, it is the whole Roku experience right there on the television.

And you can see right here as I move away, that you've got your home, your feed, your search, your streaming channels.

I've got an Xbox plugged into this television. I've got a Nintendo Switch, I've got actually two Xboxes.

And here you can see all my apps right there. Netflix, CBS, All Access, YouTube, Prime Video, even Apple TV. TCL TVs are now completely compatible with Apple HomeKit, which means you can airplay content to it.

I've even got a streaming Sonos bar on this particular television, which you can add very easily to these televisions, which is very cool.

They come in all shapes and sizes. They've got a couple of different series. You've got the 4-Series, the 5-Series, the 6-Series. This is a 4-Series.

And to give you an example of the cost, as I talked about earlier, Steven, this 4-Series, over a 4-Series at 55-inches, will run you $499, Canadian.

**Steven Scott:** Okay, so that's how an insanely affordable price. I now know why you gravitate towards them because you're cheap, obviously. But also because you get good quality, right?

So, I know you've raved about these. I know you've raved about Roku and TCL as a brand, but what about accessibility on these TVs, Marc? Do they stand up to the others that we've talked about?

**Marc Aflalo:** I probably should have (Marc chuckling) anticipated this question giving of course the title of the show and everything you're gonna ask me about here.

**Steven Scott:** Yep. Here it goes, sighted guy. Not thought it through.

**Marc Aflalo:** No, but wait a second. I have the solution here, okay? Wait, wait a second. I have the solution here. (Steven chuckling)

Thankfully I have on speed dial on my phone someone who works at TCL.

**Steven Scott:** Well, with so many of those TVs now, I should think so as well.

(phone dialing)

**Marc Aflalo:** Hey, Bruce, Bruce! It's Marc Aflalo from doubletap TV.

**Bruce Walker:** Hey Marc, how are you? What's happening?

**Marc Aflalo:** Guys, this is Bruce Walker. He's a product evangelist. Representative of TCL in North America.

Bruce, we're talking big screen TVs and one of the things that everybody kind of called me out on, is accessibility when it comes to TCL TVs. Can you talk a little bit about the accessibility features on these TVs?

**Bruce Walker:** Absolutely, yes.

Our goal at TCL, we want everybody to, "Enjoy more," is our tagline. So we have some great features built into our TVs whether it's our TCL Roku TVs, or an Android TVs, we have some great features for accessibility to let everybody enjoy more.

Of course all of our TVs have closed captioning built into them. And a real interesting thing that's come up of late, to get a little nerdy.

Because our TVs are so bright and vibrant now, we've heard some feedback from customers that the lettering on the closed captioning can be almost distractingly bright.

So now we've got a whole range of settings for brightness and transparency and font and things like that to make it more enjoyable.

A great thing we have on both Roku and Android, named a little bit differently, but basically is an audio guide, that can be turned on very easily. So that if you're navigating your way through the menu, the TV will announce where you are in the menu system.

So, if you wanna go to brightness, just follow the guided prompts and it will get you to adjusting anything on the TV that you want to.

And then on our Roku TVs, with our app, or advanced remote control, you have a great voice search. So you can push a button and say, "Watch, 'Expedition Unknown' on Discovery, go," and it'll automatically start playing it for you.

Of course, we've got compatibility on our TVs with Google Home, with Alexa. With new updates on our newer 4K TVs, you have Apple HomeKit.

And of course, a real big win as far as accessibility goes, I think is on our Android TVs. Is having Google Assistant built in. So not only can you do great search and finding and launching of content, but you can find out things like the weather and things like that all by a simple push the button on the remote control.

So when it comes to accessibility, in addition to all the great things that TCL TV is bringing to the market, we wanna make sure that every customer out there gets the chance to enjoy our TVs to the best of their ability.

**Marc Aflalo:** Bruce Walker, guys. That's Bruce Walker from TCL. Bruce, thanks for letting me call you.

We're gonna have you on an upcoming show to talk more about TCL alone, okay? I promise.

**Bruce Walker:** Absolutely. Hope you win the grand prize for phoning a friend.

**Marc Aflalo:** You know, one of the things Bruce didn't mention is that there's the actual Roku app that you can download to your smartphone.

So this means, if you've got voiceover and all those features enabled on your phone, you can control the TV even better, but not only that there's things like Bluetooth audio, where you can actually listen to the audio on the TV on more than one device as well.

They call this the wife-saving, or the marriage-saving feature which allows you to quietly listen to your TV, or whatever's on it, any of your smart apps, while someone next to you might be sleeping.

So a very, very cool offering. I love these things in my house. That's why I've got them in absolutely every single room. It is the TCL televisions. Check them out.

They've got series three, four, five, six all the way to the eighth series which this year is gonna be featuring the 4K and even 8K across the entire lineup.

**Steven Scott:** Hey, as I always say, not everyone who is blind can see nothing at all.

The good thing is though, Marc, there's something for everyone in today's show, right? And on that point, if we have time, I just wanna put in a few honorable mentions.

Just to say, Panasonic have been selling talking TVs back since 2012, actually, which announce on-screen information and the most important menus like the banner information, accessibility menu and volume controls of speech. The electronic program guide does not, for some reason.

Apple TV was launched with a feature called, "Voiceover," which is their screen reader, I mentioned it earlier. And that enables access to video-on-demand services and TV catch-up apps, but does not show standard broadcast television.

And finally, Fire TV also have speech via its voiceover, VoiceView, I should say, screen reader. (Steven chuckling) So many different screen readers with different names.

You can browse Amazon's catalog using the, "Voice search," function and view content using that screen reader. Third party apps are not supported though. Like the Apple TV, it does enable access to video-on-demand services and TV catch-up apps, but does not again, show standard broadcast TV. (background rock music)

And I'm really looking forward to trying out the new Fire TV Edition TVs from JVC to see how accessible those are.

**Marc Aflalo:** Lots of options for you guys to choose from. Of course, this week we talked Sony, we talked Samsung, we talked TCL.

Thank you guys for being here on this week's edition of doubletap TV.

Again, if you wanna reach out, follow us on Twitter, it is @DoubleTapCanada. Use the #AskDoubleTap whenever you're tweet to us.

And of course, if you wanna send an email it's feedback@ami.ca.

On behalf of Shaun Preece and Steven Scott, I am Marc Aflalo. We'll talk to you again next week.

(logo whooshes)

**Voiceover:** For more great doubletap TV content, visit ami.ca/doubletap.

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