

Mariner Software

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An introduction to Characters, Actors, and Voices

Jim Henson - 2015-03-24 - in [Narrator](#)

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Remember radio programs? Before we could see soap operas, action sequences, comedy shows, or news broadcasts on television, we listened to them over the radio. Cowboys, superheroes, villains, clowns--characters and personalities of all types--made action, comedy, and suspense exciting and dramatic with nothing other than sounds played on the radio.

One of the key factors of the success of radio programs was the ability of actors and actresses to bring characters to life with their voices. Narrator provides a set of tools to produce a similar result: bring texts to life by casting strong characters.

Characters in Narrator follow the same type of thinking as casting for a Radio program. They can be named, customized, and assigned as necessary to fit the production of a text.

Narrator uses **Actors** (voice synthesizers provided by Mac OS's VoiceOver utility)--several regular and "Novelty" voices--to make characterization possible. The voices are configurable in a number of different ways, making the possibilities for unique and lively characters nearly endless.

Creating a character requires little more than creating a character, assigning it an actor, and providing the actor with instructions on how to read the part.

Managing Characters in Narrator

To create a character, select **Director > New Character**. This creates a new character with default values, which you can configure with voice controls (see below).

Configuring Actors within Narrator

Actor Voice Controls

Narrator provides four ways that users can configure actors' voices:

- **Rate:** how fast an actor reads text.
- **Pitch:** how high or low the pitch of the actor's voice is while reading text.
- **Inflection:** the amount that the actor's tone of voice will modulate (or vary) when speaking the text. Minimal inflection produces a monotone voice; the maximum amount produces a voice that is significantly varied.
- **Volume:** how loud (or soft) an actor reads.

Silent Characters

Two actors pass over text without reading it out loud:

- **Silent (Read Along)** follows the text at the rate assigned to it (under the Rate voice control).
- **Silent (Skip Over)** skips the text assigned to it entirely. The presentation resumes immediately at the next point another character, including Silent (Read Along) is assigned to.

Use these actors to create characters that allow for either a measured pause or for the user to read as Narrator highlights the current word.

Installing Additional Voices

In addition to the voices provided by Apple, [Cepstral](#) provides high-quality voices that can be installed into Mac OS (making them usable by Narrator).

Assigning Voices to the Text

For instructions on how to assign characters to texts, see [this article](#).