

Can You Type Like I Type?

By Frank Petrie

Product: MacSpeech Dictate

Author: MacSpeech <www.macspeech.com/>

Requirements: Intel-based Mac; Mac OS X 10.5.2 or greater, Mac OS X 10.4.11; internet connection required for product registration; MacSpeech-certified noise-cancelling microphone (included).

Price: \$199.00

Test Rig: MacBook 1.83Mhz; 4GB RAM

Probably the last world of technology to be perfected will be speech technology. And we're getting much closer than we have been thus far.

"MacSpeech Dictate provides a whole new way to interact with your Mac. Instead of typing, use your voice to input text; rather than clicking your mouse, just speak commands. With MacSpeech Dictate, it's easy. ...

... MacSpeech Dictate provides astounding accuracy and productivity. With just minutes of training, you'll be using MacSpeech Dictate's superior capabilities."

Now I'm going to be looking with a slightly different eye than most of you. I am handicapped. Now I have become a pretty mean single finger typist but I know that I could get so much more done if I could only increase my output. Let's see how MacSpeech has fared.

THE JUICE

Set up couldn't be any simpler. Pull out the headphones, insert the headphone and microphone jack and install the two software disks. (You can purchase Dictate with out a set of headphones. The headphones cost extra.) Now, what you have to do is to learn all the various commands. And that's it.

A note about the headphones. Both the headphone and microphone jacks plug-in to a Plantronics USB dongle. This way, your audio input and output are left free to use for other devices.

To train dictate to the sound of your voice, all you have to do is read about five minutes of text to it. After that, it should recognize your voice and you'll be good to go.

THE PULP

Dictate is very addictive. Yes, you have to speak like you're spoke to speaking to a small child, but it's nowhere near as tedious as dictation software once was. I can see how once I have mastered Dictate, how this could save me a lot of time by replacing my inept typing skills. The reason for the vast improvement in its accuracy is its use of Dragon's Naturally Speaking engine.

Dictate will be very, very useful for the handicapped. Once you have learned all its commands, you should rarely have to touch the keyboard at all. Not only can you dictate, but you can also edit documents, open and close applications, plus navigate your Mac. That levels the playing field enormously.

THE RIND

First, the hardest thing is memorizing all the different commands. But then again, that goes with the territory.

The biggest problem that I had, was with the USB dongle. Inside it was slightly malformed, so I had to do a bit of work to get both jacks plugged in. But once it was in, and I had the headphone and microphone highlighted in the system preferences sound pane, I was able to proceed with this review.

SUMMARY

Dictation software is leaps and bounds beyond what it once was. Now, instead of talking like an android, you can speak to it as if you're talking to a small child. I know that once I can make this a habit, that my will greatly improve.

Unfortunately, I'll still be a bonehead.

RATING : 8 out of 10

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