

## Use Speech to Control Your PC and Compose Text

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### Speak:

Many modern devices have digital voice personalities that can help you find things or complete tasks. Some of these even have names, like Siri for Apple devices, Alexa for Amazon Echo, and Cortana for Windows. Microsoft Office and Windows 10 recently have added or upgraded speech features that provide both text to speech and speech to text. Speak is a new feature that helps you proofread what you have typed by listening to the computer read it aloud.

For example, if I'm typing a Word document and want to see if my wording is smooth and accurate, I can use "Speak" to hear how it sounds. The Speak feature is also found in other Microsoft apps - Outlook, PowerPoint, and OneNote.



*Speak icon*

To use 'Speak,' click anywhere in a document. Then click the Review tab on the ribbon. In the Speech group, click 'Read Aloud,' which opens an audio control bar. Click the right-pointing single arrow, then sit back and listen. You can choose a male or female voice by clicking the setting icon which resembles a



*Audio Control bar*

person on the audio bar.

### Windows Speech Recognition (WSR):

Windows has had a speech recognition feature for several years. This tool lets a user dictate into a microphone without the use of a keyboard or mouse and have his or her speech translated into text. It can be used to compose articles, write letters or emails, fill out forms, or complete other writing tasks. You can also use WSR to perform the basic functions of a computer, like opening an app, selecting a word, showing a list of commands, and adding punctuation. Originally, it was difficult to set up, but the current version is much easier to configure and use. Learning to use WSR is especially worthwhile if your typing skills are weak.

You must have a microphone before setting up Speech Recognition. I found that a set of headphones with a microphone attached works very well. While it is also possible to find a Windows microphone in the MS store, a headset or free-standing mic is recommended.

Once you have a microphone plugged into your computer and turned on, it's time to locate and set up Speech Recognition. In Windows 7, click Start > All Programs > Accessories > Ease of Access > Speech Recognition. In Win 10, type 'Speech' in the Search box and choose the best match, Speech Recognition, which opens the Speech Configuration window, pictured below:

## Configure your Speech Recognition experience



### Start Speech Recognition

Start using your voice to control your computer.



### Set up microphone

Set up your computer to work properly with Speech Recognition.



### Take Speech Tutorial

Learn to use your computer with speech. Learn basic commands and dictation.



### Train your computer to better understand you

Read text to your computer to improve your computer's ability to understand your voice. Doing this isn't necessary, but can help improve dictation accuracy.



### Open the Speech Reference Card

View and print a list of common commands to keep with you so you always know what to say.

### *Speech Configuration Window*

1. There is a wizard (set of steps) to help you with setup. Click “Start Speech Recognition” to start the wizard. It will take you through all the steps in the order in which they are listed.
2. First, you will set up the microphone for correct placement and volume setting.
3. The speech tutorial consists of two short video tutorials that demonstrate the two main uses for speech recognition: “How to use WSR to get around your computer” and “How to use dictation with WSR”. These are worth watching more than once.
4. In “Train your computer,” you practice reading text aloud so that WSR can learn your vocal inflections, accent, and tone. This makes the transition from speech to text more accurate.
5. The last step is to print a few pages of valuable commands that WSR recognizes, a handy list.

While no speech recognition tool is perfect, the Windows version does a pretty good job, and setup is an easy, non-threatening process.