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Note for note: Reporter takes Livescribe Smartpen on a test drive »

10:01 AM PT, December 21, 2009



It's no '70s TV spy phone hidden in a shoe, but the Smartpen digital audio recorder is still pretty clever. Livescribe's little gadget combines note-taking and audio recording into one smart package. By linking handwriting to audio, this pen could determine the future of how journalists function on the daily.

The Smartpen records everything you say, hear and write all at the same time, creating an interactive document that synthesizes audio and sound. The key is the relationship between Livescribe's proprietary micro-dot paper and the pen's camera that captures your note-taking action in all its glory.

This digitized love-match of handwriting and audio can then be uploaded to a computer, shared and exported as either an image or just straight audio. You can also convert your handwritten notes to text with MyScript, a transcription software program created for the pen. According to Livescribe's documentation, MyScript "seamlessly" transcribes handwriting, but it's not always as efficient, sometimes requiring additional editing before exporting a legible document to Word or e-mail.

Pen tip: Nestled behind the ink cartridge is a high-speed infrared camera that snaps 72 shots a second and captures every pen stroke.

USB: Use the USB connector to upload contents of the pen to either a PC or a Mac and share it with friends or the

X Questions



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e-world via 250 megabytes of free online storage from Livescribe.

Microphone: The built-in microphone has adjustable settings (lecture hall, conference, automatic) and is sensitive enough that we'd be able to eavesdrop on our cubicle mates without too much trouble, which we would never do, since recording people without their permission is illegal.

Speaker: The included ear buds provide "3-D" sound, but the pen's on-board speaker is powerful enough to annoy your cubicle neighbor when you replay that audio session of you writing and saying "This is a test" over and over.

Transcription: Vision Objects has partnered with Livescribe to create MyScript, a transcription program that converts handwriting to text. You can buy it for \$29.95 online, but we recommend downloading the 30-day trial version to see if your handwriting is neat enough to work with the program.

Applications: Livescribe recently launched its beta app store, which offers free downloads, such as video poker and foreign-language travel phrases, as well as paid apps that include such things as guitar chords for beginners and Hebrew chanting. Whether it was the poor penmanship or the lack of any discernable musical skills, we couldn't get the piano app to work very well, but we loved the Spanish-to-English dictionary.

Paper: The Smartpen only works with Livescribe's proprietary micro-dot paper, so you either have to buy their notepads (\$12.95 to \$24.95 for multipacks) or you can print your own paper free from within the desktop software -- assuming you have an Adobe-enabled color laser jet that prints with a minimum resolution of 600 dpi.

The Price: Bargain hunters beware: Depending on the model, prices range from \$169 to \$249, so don't go chewing on this pen. www.livescribe.com

--Melissa Henderson

Image via Livescribe

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Today's Agenda

- » Hammer presents: "Flood Tide: Remixed"
- » Hooray for Hollywood ft. a Tribute to "Star Wars"
- » "Sad Happy Sucker"
- » Football season specials at Pink Taco
- » "Love, Loss and What I Wore"

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SEPTEMBER							»
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
			1	2	3	4	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	
26	27	28	29	30	1	2	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	

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