Intro to *Windows 7* Speech Recognition

**What IS Speech Recognition on Computers?**

Speech Recognition is software (or a program) allowing a user to speak into the microphone of a computer or device (such as a Smart Phone or Tablet) to tell the machine what to do. (Voice recognition is often another term used for speech recognition.) Speech Recognition software has been around for many years, but it hasn’t been until recently that we have been more in tune with using this interesting area of technology. (iPhones for example are known for *Siri* as their voice recognition software program)

You can either purchase programs that will learn your voice and allow you to do speech recognition, the most popular and well-rated being Dragonware, or you can opt to use the free speech recognition software built into *Windows Vista, 7*, and *8* machines. Before purchasing software, it might be worthwhile to try what comes free with *Windows*. That is what we will do today.

Here is one website rating three of Dragon’s products (that you would purchase) that allow for speech recognition.  

**Why Use Speech Recognition Software?**

Sometimes, it is easier to dictate thoughts rather than type them out, or it might be easier to direct a computer to do things through voice instead of using a mouse. Sometimes, an injury or learning disability, or physical disability may prevent someone from successfully interacting with a computer through the typical methods of mouse, keyboard, and/or touchscreen actions. This is particularly where Speech Recognition can be of help. Some people may find it faster to dictate into the computer rather than use the keyboard or mouse. Speech recognition can help with this, too.

**Can I use Speech Recognition Right Away?**

Yes and no. In *Windows Vista, 7*, or *8*, you can turn on Speech Recognition fairly easily and quickly, but the first time you use it, you should plan to spend about a half hour or hour of time learning how it works by going through a built-in tutorial that comes with the computer. Then you will have a much less period of time where frustrations may build.

*[Here is a list of what your computer needs to use Speech Recognition Software:](http://www.consumersearch.com/voice-recognition-software/how-to-buy-voice-recognition-software)*

**LET’S START!**

1. For library computers, we have a microphone and speakers built into the monitor/body of the computer. You could use the computer in the state it is currently in, or you can opt to plug in a headset and microphone into the jacks on the lower left-hand edge of the monitor as you are facing it. Either way, you also want to click the horn icon in the lower right hand corner of your screen display to activate or turn on the sound, then move the dial upward on the range control to increase volume, or move the dial downward to decrease volume.

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[Image of microphone and speaker icon]
2. Click the **Start Button** on our *Windows 7* machines.

3. Type **speech recognition** into the search box.

4. You should notice that speech recognition comes right up in the list, and you can immediately click on *Windows Speech Recognition* to get started for your first time ever. This option will welcome you and take you step-by-step through the process. If you choose just **Speech Recognition**, the welcome screen does not come up, and you will be brought to an activation screen.

5. Follow the prompts on the *Windows Speech Recognition Welcome Screen* (see below and click the **Next** button.

6. The next screen asks you to set up your microphone and headset if you have one.
7. Once you have chosen your microphone source and you have clicked the Next button, you will see this screen, and after reading this, click the Next button where you will speak into the computer, reading the sentence that appears. This will make sure the microphone is working. After you have read the sentence, click the Next button.

8. You will then see this screen appear, and you can click the Next button and you will be asked to enable or disable document review. This website (http://b27.cc.trincoll.edu/weblogs/sta/2010/05/speech_recognition_on_windows_7.html) explains document review as follows: You are now prompted to enable document review or not to. Enabling it will allow windows to search your documents and email to see what phrases you use more and will allow it to more accurately recognize your speech. Feel free to choose whatever option you need.

Probably, at home this would be great, but for our needs today, we can choose to disable this document review option, and click the Next button. This next screen asks if you want to use voice activation or manual activation – choose voice activation for now, then click Next. On the next screen, choose to View Reference Sheet, and explore all the details. Note you can opt to print the sheet, but for now, click Next.
On the next screen that appears, **UNCHECK** the box that asks you to Run Speech Recognition at Startup. Click **Next**. You will then be prompted to either start the tutorial or skip it. For our purposes, you will be taking the tutorial, so click **START TUTORIAL**.

Now, follow the on-screen prompts.

Remember that the tutorial expects you to stay within its parameters, so you won’t be able to say something different for it to do. You are just practicing within the confines of the tutorial. OUTSIDE OF the tutorial, you can venture into other areas of interest using other commands. For now, “stick to the script” to best learn how this feature works.

On the next page is a brief list of frequently used commands for starters. At home, you may choose to print the entire topic for quick reference.