

Talk to Your Devices

As we age our ability to type may decline and the keyboards on some devices may be too small to use easily. For those reasons it can be helpful to have an alternative way to enter text. Almost all devices now accept voice input. Here are some ways you can use your voice.

Computer

In order to use dictation with your computer you need to have a microphone of some sort. If you have a laptop, it should already have one built in. If you have a desktop, it may or may not have a microphone in the monitor. If not, you may add one either by plugging a microphone into the back of the computer in the pink jack, adding a camera and microphone such as you would use for Zoom or using something like a Bluetooth headset if your computer supports Bluetooth. The best results come from the use of a headset. When you first use your microphone, it is useful to go through the training so that the system will recognize how you speak. To do additional training open the Control Panel and click on Speech Recognition. Here you can train your computer to better understand you and also take the speech tutorial. There is also a Speech Reference Card to tell you what you can say.

Dictating in Microsoft Office

Microsoft Office 365 has built in speech recognition. This makes it easy to dictate. Word, PowerPoint, and Outlook all support voice recognition. If you have a standalone version of Office such as 2016 or 2019, dictation is not included. You can always use dictation by going to Office.com and logging in with your Microsoft account (you can set one up if you don't have one) and you will have access to a fully featured version of office. By default, this will save files to your OneDrive account, but you can download them to your computer. You can also install a free version of Microsoft Office on your phone and tablet.

To use dictation in Office 365, click the dictate button on the home menu In Word and PowerPoint, and in an email message in Outlook. Just speak to your computer and it will automatically recognize what you are saying and put it on the screen. To pause dictation just tap the dictate icon again or the microphone icon. To turn off dictation close the listening box.

Dictation will recognize a number of languages including Spanish, French, German and Italian. To fully use these other languages, you will need to install them on your computer. Click the settings icon on the microphone screen and select the spoken language that you want. The first time you use it, it will tell you that proofing tools do not exist and ask if you would like to download them.

You can also turn on auto punctuation to have it punctuate for you. As with any technology this may or may not work exactly as you wish. If you pause it will put a period there and start a new sentence. If you don't want to use auto punctuation you can turn it off. You can add punctuation by telling it what punctuation you want such as a period or question mark.

A list of commands you can use in Office is located at <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/dictate-your-documents-in-word-3876e05f-3fcc-418f-b8ab-db7ce0d11d3c>

For other programs

For programs that don't have built in speech recognition, including standalone versions of Office, you can use the speech recognition app to dictate. To open the app, open the Control Panel then Ease of Access. From there select Use the computer without a mouse or keyboard. Click on Use speech recognition. The first time you use it you will have to go through the setup process. After that you can just open it up and use it. It is a good idea to do the training so that your voice is recognized correctly.



To create a desktop shortcut for dictation go to your desktop, right click and select new then shortcut. In the type the location box enter "C:\WINDOWS\Speech\Common\sapisvr.exe -SpeechUX -Startup" (without the quotation marks) and click next. In the next box give it a name such as dictation and finish. Now you will have a shortcut on your desktop to open the dictation tool.

Cortana

You can control your computer using Cortana. Open Cortana and tap the microphone icon. You can set Cortana to use the wake word 'Hey Cortana' so that it can be summoned with your voice. In Cortana you can open up programs, ask questions, get traffic information and many other things. A list of commands that you can give Cortana is at <https://www.cnet.com/tech/computing/the-complete-list-of-cortana-commands/>

Android Phone

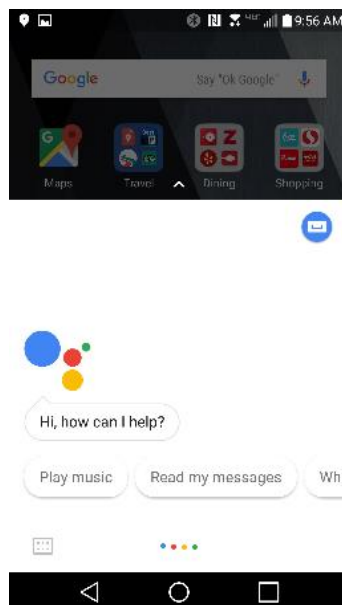
Google App



The Google app on your phone has an icon to bring it up in voice mode, the area with the white circle. Just tap it and the Google assistant will appear

Google Assistant

The Google assistant has now been upgraded to work on all versions of Android 6.0 and above. It is also available for IOS (iPhone) as well as tablets and other Android devices. To activate it hold the home key down on your phone, tape the icon on the Google app or just say OK Google. This will pop up the assistant.



What can you do with it?

Here are a few of the things you can do by speaking to your phone:

Make a call, send a text, set reminders, turn on battery saver and instantly look up emails.

Check your flight status, make a dinner reservation, check when your movie starts, and find a coffee stop along your route.

Control music on Google Play and YouTube Music.

Get real-time answers including the latest on weather, traffic, finance, or sports. Quickly find translations while you're traveling.

You can also dictate in the messaging app or in Gmail by tapping the microphone icon on the top left of the pop up keyboard. This will also work in the Microsoft apps if you have installed them.

Android Tablet

Tablets have essentially the same functionality as phones. To activate the Assistant on an Android tablet either tap the Assistant bar, say 'OK Google' or hold down the home key.

You can actually make both voice and video calls from your tablet by using the Duo App as long as you are online.

Apple Devices

Apple devices such as the iPhone and iPad also support voice commands.

TV

Most TV providers now have remote controls that accept voice input. Comcast, Dish, Roku and Amazon Firestick all support voice. If you have had your tuner for some time, it may be necessary to get a new remote that supports voice.

Comcast allows control over some functions. More details are at

<https://www.xfinity.com/support/articles/xr11-remote-faqs>

Dish TV voice support is at <https://www.dish.com/features/voice-control/>

For Roku go to <https://support.roku.com/article/360009552694> for instructions on using the voice commands.

In the case of the Amazon Firestick, it has all the functionality of an Amazon Echo. To see what you can do go to settings and Alexa, then Things to Try. More information about voice on firestick is at

<https://www.amazon.com/b?node=23477582011>