

# Using the Microsoft Office Handwriting Tool

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By Karen McCall, M.Ed.  
Karlen Communications  
Adaptive Technology Consulting and Training Practice  
[Contact Karlen Communications](#)  
[Karlen Communications web site](#)

Although the speech tool is also found on the Language Bar in Microsoft© Office XP© or Office 2003©, this document does not cover instructions on how to use the Speech tool. For the document on the speech tool, please visit the [Karlen Communications New Technology](#) web page.

This document introduces you to handwriting technology and the benefits of using it. The information focuses on using handwriting on a desktop or traditional laptop computer. For information specific to tablet technology and the Windows XP Tablet PC operating system, visit the Karlen Communications New Technology web page. .

If you use JAWS, you will need to make sure that the “disable language bar” checkbox remains unchecked, it’s default state. To verify this, press JawsKey + J, choose Basics, press Alt + P for Windows System Properties and Tab to the disable language bar check box. If you use the hotkey, you will change the state from unchecked to checked or vice versa.

## Introduction and Background

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With Microsoft Office XP or 2003, Microsoft includes two additional tools to assist in the creation of documents: the speech tool and the handwriting tool.

The speech tool is a non-hands free version of voice recognition. It is designed to be used with a mouse, keyboard or alternate input device. You will need a microphone to use this tool. It also requires training, however the training is not as extensive as with other voice recognition software such as Dragon© NaturallySpeaking© from ScanSoft©.

The handwriting tool lets you use a mouse, tablet mouse or tablet/tablet PC to enter text into a document using your handwriting instead of a keyboard. This tool has a correction and recognition mode. You can choose to have the handwriting inserted into the document as an image, or as text. The handwriting tool in Microsoft Office XP or later can be used on a desktop or traditional laptop computer. It is, as mentioned, an integral tool of tablet technology, and on a tablet works in a slightly different way, which is why handwriting on a tablet isn’t covered in this document

The speech and handwriting tools are found on the same toolbar which is why this document provides some cursory information about the speech tool.

The configuration used for this document was a desktop and traditional laptop computer with a tablet mouse.

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### **Additional Costs**

If you are using an existing desktop or laptop computer, it should have a minimum of 512 MB RAM and be upgraded to 1GB if you decide that this technology is usable. Of course, the other element to look at is how old the computer is – it may be more cost effective to purchase a newer system. If you are looking for a new system, you might want to consider wither a slate or convertible tablet. You can determine this once you've explored the technology.

To use the handwriting tool, you'll need a tablet mouse with stylus or a slate/tablet or convertible/tablet PC. Although the help files in MS-Office say that you can use a mouse, it is awkward to write legibly using the mouse. A tablet mouse with stylus is a minimal investment to test the technology for your needs, and performs well with this tool. If you are going to use handwriting for lectures or meetings, you will want to invest in a slate or convertible tablet.

If you are going to use a tablet mouse, it is recommended that a Wacom© Graphire© mouse and stylus be used. The [Microsoft documentation for tablet technology](#) and specifically handwriting recognition indicates that on a tablet operating system handwriting is recognized at 130 samples per second. When you use a tablet mouse on a regular Windows XP operating system, this drops to 40 samples per second. The capability of the tablet mouse/stylus to recognize and convert is dependent on the tablet mouse/stylus software rather than the operating system enhancements for digitizing handwriting. Therefore it is critical that you use a more robust and full featured tablet mouse/stylus.

- Wacom Graphire 3 tablet mouse: \$199.00 CDN

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### **Using the Handwriting Tool if You Have a Disability**

Using the handwriting tool on a desktop or traditional laptop computer provides an opportunity for people with disabilities to enter data into the computer in a more user friendly way than keyboarding. As with voice recognition, the quality of handwriting is a critical component. The tool can recognize your handwriting to a point, but the letters and numbers need to be clear and consistent. Starting with the handwriting tool being used on a desktop is an inexpensive way to try the technology before investing in a tablet computer.

If you have a visual disability, you may want to investigate this method of entering information into the computer as a way of maintaining a connection with the printed page. One advantage over voice recognition is that you can include drawings and diagrams in your computer based notes. Currently, both MAGic and ZoomText work fairly well with the tablet mouse on a windows XP Home or Professional system.

If you have a transcriber, this might be a way of taking notes that is less intrusive in the classroom as opposed to using voice recognition. Since notes can contain both text and drawings, this may prove more useful than a text file of notes. You will have to test the technology using a traditional laptop with tablet mouse to evaluate it for your needs.

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## General Use

If you have computer based RSI or Repetitive Stress Injury, using the handwriting tool lets you change posture and data entry devices. You can choose the tool, mouse, keyboard or handwriting depending on the stress you feel in your hands, arms or back. By adding the capability to use the speech tool, you take full advantage of the tools built into Microsoft Office XP or later to offset ergonomic issues.

Some of us have problems moving from a paper based way of keeping records to a computer based method. Using the handwriting tool may provide a bridge between the two methods and lessen anxiety and stress levels.

Using the speech or handwriting tool should not be a substitute for learning how to use a keyboard. There are times when handwriting is not available and keyboarding is necessary.

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## Installing the Handwriting Tool

When you install the handwriting tool, you can install the speech tool [basic voice recognition] at the same time. This article includes the speech tool in the installation instructions.

To install the handwriting tool in MS-Office:

1. Choose Start > Control Panel.
2. Select Add or Remove Programs.
3. Select Microsoft Office XP or 2003, [your current version of MS-Office].
4. Insert the program CD into the drive.
5. Select Change.
6. Select Add or Remove Features.
7. Select Next.
8. Select the Choose advanced customization of applications check box on the Custom Setup screen.
9. Select Next.
10. Use the right Arrow to expand the options for Office Shared Features.
11. Use the Right Arrow to expand the options for Alternative User Input. .
12. For both Handwriting and Speech, choose Run from My Computer by “right clicking” on the item and using the Down Arrow to find “Run from My Computer.”
13. Use the right Arrow to expand the Conversion tools options.
14. For Handwriting, choose Run From My computer by “right clicking” on this item and using the Down Arrow to find “Run from My Computer.”

15. Select Update.

Although it isn't necessary, I still like to restart my computer after I install anything new.

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## Using the Handwriting Tool

This tool is accessed from the Language bar under the Tools menu. It lets you create handwritten content and either store it as handwriting or convert it to text.

To activate the handwriting tool:

1. Install the software for the tablet mouse and make sure it is plugged into a USB port. Most tablet mice won't work if plugged into a USB hub. They need to be plugged directly into the computer.
2. Launch Microsoft Word.
3. Choose Tools > Speech
4. If you are not setting up the microphone, press Cancel which launches the Speech toolbar containing the handwriting tools.
5. Choose the handwriting tool from the Language toolbar, and choose either the Write Anywhere option or the Writing Pad. Each has a floating palette containing tasks and options.

Using the Write Anywhere option, lets you write anywhere on the document window. Once the pen is removed from the tablet, or you pause in writing, based on the pre-set pause time, your handwriting is converted to text and placed at the cursor point.

If the "recognize" now option isn't turned on, your handwriting will be inserted as an image at the cursor point. The image will be the same size as the font being used at the cursor point. This can be used as a form of digital signature. You would want to protect your document though so your signature wasn't shared.

Using the Writing Pad option lets you use a guiding line as a baseline for writing. This may be useful if you have mobility impairments or visual disabilities and need a guiding line for writing. The Writing Pad palette will be located at the bottom of the computer screen. Options for ink and recognition appear on the right side of the palette.

Using the handwriting tool is like reading under a CCTV or Closed Circuit Television. The writing takes place out of line from the keyboard or monitor.

If you are using the handwriting tool on a desktop or traditional laptop computer, you will need to look at the monitor rather than the tablet mouse when creating text. Although the tablet mouse can be moved so that it is inline with the monitor, writing still takes place out of line of the document itself.

The handwriting tool also lets you insert drawings or diagrams into a document as an object. Choose the Drawing Pad from the Handwriting tool in the Language toolbar. This opens a Drawing Pad palette on the right side of the screen. The options for the Drawing Pad are at the top of the palette.

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### **Writing Pad and Write Anywhere Options**

With either the Writing Pad or Write Anywhere palette visible on the screen, right click the small down arrow in the upper left corner of the palette. Choose Options from the drop down list .

There are settings that are common to both the Writing Pad and Write Anywhere. These include ink colour, thickness of the writing, the delay time between last stroke and recognition and where the palette toolbar is located.

Other common settings are:

- Automatic space after words – Recognition > Add space after insertion.
- Automatic recognition – Recognition > Automatic recognition .
- Rate at which handwriting is recognized – Recognition > adjust the slider to the left or right.
- Toolbar layout > Right or left position.
- Toolbar layout > Small or large buttons.

There are also settings unique to the Writing Pad. These include choosing a different background colour for the writing surface and the number of lines to display in the Writing Pad.

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### **Correcting Misrecognition**

With the handwriting tool, there is also a way to make some corrections to misrecognized text. This is similar to the way you can correct misinterpreted text in voice recognition software. However, you can't train the handwriting tool the way you can voice recognition software.

The Help files in Microsoft Word say to right click the misrecognized text and then click on the Ink Object icon on the handwriting palette. What they don't mention in this help file is that you need to make sure that the eraser tool is turned off. The eraser tool is a toggle, so pressing it once will allow you to use your stylus as an eraser [when you select text it will be deleted]. If you select it again, you stop erasing and can use the stylus for other editing functions.

If you see a misrecognized word, put your focus in the word and press the right mouse button. This brings up a list of possible replacements. If you don't see the word you want, select More which brings up additional words and the original image of the text. If you choose the original image of the text, this will be inserted into the document instead of the converted text. If the word you wanted isn't in any of the lists, simply type it into place.

If the eraser tool is turned on, when you press the right mouse button, you'll get the normal context menu. You will also delete any text you select in the document. Ctrl +Z will undo this action so you can continue editing.

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## **Deleting or Erasing Text**

You can delete text using the keyboard to select it and then press the Delete key. You can also select the text using the mouse and press the Delete key.

If you want to use the eraser on the handwriting toolbar, select the eraser on the handwriting toolbar and then select the text to be erased. Once you've finished erasing, it is important to select the eraser again to stop erasing. If you don't, every time you select text, it will automatically be erased.

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## **Handwritten Comments**

You can also use the handwriting tool with the commenting tool. First make sure that the handwriting tool is active. Then position your cursor at the point in the document that you want the comment to relate to. Press Alt + the letter I for Insert, then the letter M for Comment. The comment edit area appears in the right margin of the document. At this point, you can write in the Writing Pad and when you pause, the text will be converted in the comment edit area. By pressing the Escape key twice, your focus is removed from the comment edit area and returned to the document at the cursor point.

The keyboard command to insert a comment is Ctrl + Alt + M. Note that if you are using the MAGic screen reader, this keystroke launches MAGic and doesn't create a comment. You'll need to use the PassKey, MAGicKey + 3, then press Ctrl + Alt + M.

to locate a comment, press Ctrl + G to bring up the go To dialog box and change the "To what" item to comment [Alt + the letter O is the hotkey to move to this list of options]. By default you will go to a page in the document. Once you've chosen to go to a comment, the list of comments in the document will appear

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## **Resources**

There is a list of resources for using handwriting on a computer on the [Karlen Communications New Technology](#) web page.

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