

Talk to Your Mac More!

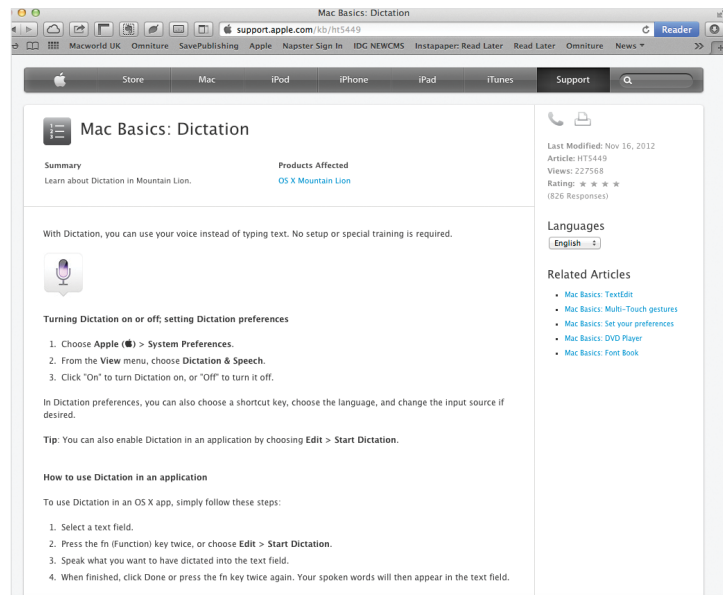
Discover the power of speech by converting your voice to words

Everybody has heard of Siri, Apple's powerful voice system for iOS that can be used to control apps, answer questions, tell jokes, and dictate messages, emails, and notes. Fewer Mac fans know that you can also perform dictation in OS X. It's an incredibly useful feature to become familiar with. Although you can't control a Mac using your voice like Siri, you can dictate emails, messages, and documents using the built-in Dictation feature. Many people overlook Dictation because it's not switched on by default, and it doesn't talk back like Siri (yet).

Up until the last couple of years, voice control has had a pretty poor reputation on computers. However, the advent of cloud computing and advances in speech recognition have transformed speech-to-text software, and the results these days are impressive.

You can use Dictation to convert speech to text, and it can be used anywhere you enter text in OS X. Dictation also works in non-Apple programs like Microsoft Word. The only requirement for Dictation is an Internet connection. Like Siri, it sends your words over the Internet to Apple's server farm where they are processed and the appropriate text is returned.

Dictation is incredibly easy to use. By default, you tap the Function key (fn) twice to start dictation, speak your text, and double-tap Function again to stop. Let's get you started. **BY MARK HATTERSLEY**



Dictation gives you a chance to rest your typing fingers and open up to your Mac on a verbal level.

>>> WHAT YOU NEED

LEVEL: **easy**

- >> OS X 10.8 or later
- >> An Internet connection

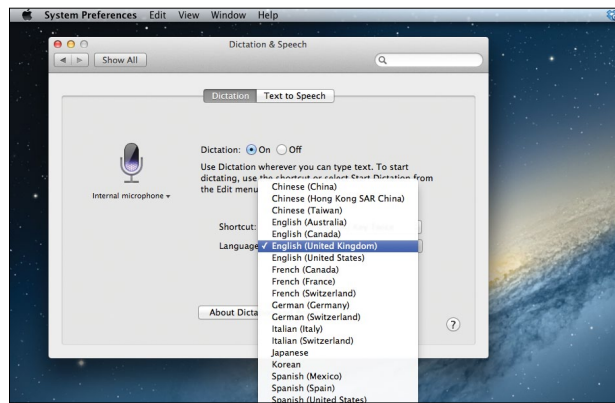
1 Turn It On

Open System Preferences and select Dictation & Speech. Dictation is turned off by default, so select "On." The first time you do this you're given a privacy warning (because it sends your voice over the Internet to Apple). Click Enable Dictation to continue.



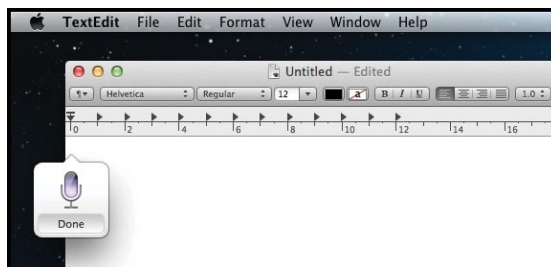
2 Check the Settings

While you're in Dictation settings, check that the Language is set to "English (United States)" and that when you speak the Microphone icon lights up. You can choose different input sources using the drop-down menu under the microphone icon.



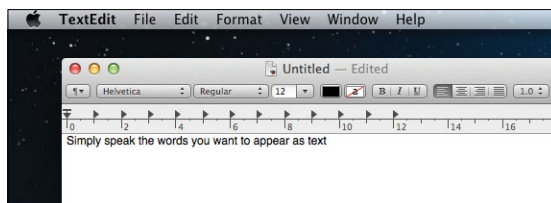
3 Start Dictation

You're ready to go. Start Text Edit (or Word, or whatever) and open a new document. Double-tap the fn key to start Dictation. Notice the purple microphone icon that appears at the cursor. Speak out the phrase you want to include. Press the fn key again when you've finished speaking.



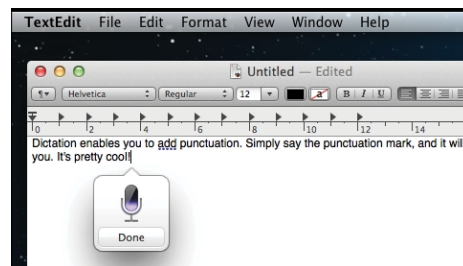
4 Check the Words

Three dots appear as Dictation works out what you've just said. It then inserts the words into the document, and you can either double-tap fn again or continue typing as before. The more you use your Mac's Dictation feature, the more accurate it becomes.



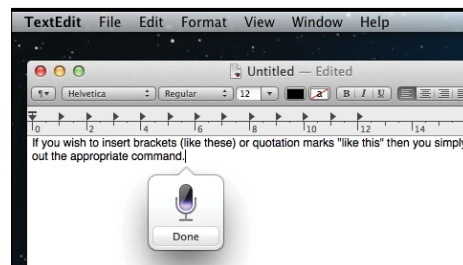
5 Adding Punctuation

Saying "period" or "dot" adds a period (and a space) to end a sentence. You can also say "new line" and "new paragraph" to create more complex documents. The Dictation feature is great for inserting hard-to-reach characters. Just say: "inverted question mark" or "Yen sign" to insert the symbol. Apple has a list of commands you can use at <http://bit.ly/1to14j5>. Remember that you're limited to 30 seconds, however. You can't just dictate an entire document without stops.



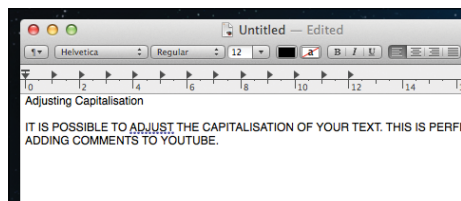
6 Quotes and Brackets

Say "quote" and "end quote" to place your text within quotation marks. This also works with brackets, square brackets, and braces. Say "open bracket" and "close bracket" before and after your spoken phrase to enclose it in the appropriate parentheses.



7 Getting the Caps

Say "caps on" to turn on sentence case, or "all caps on" for block caps. You can say "caps off" to go back to normal case. Note that there are no commands for bold text, underline, or italics in Dictation. You need to add the formatting manually afterward.



8 Use in Any Text Box

You can use Dictation in any text box within OS X, including Spotlight. The combination of Command + Space for Spotlight and a double-tap of the fn key makes it quick to perform a voice search for any Spotlight item on your Mac. If you like Dictation, try Nuance's Dragon Dictate 3 (<http://bit.ly/143gB62>). It's a more comprehensive dictation app that lets you dictate longer documents. It can also control OS X apps, just like Siri does with iOS devices.

