

Review of Dragon Naturally Speaking
Ver. 9.51.001.009 Preferred
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Overview:

Minimum System Requirements:

Intel® Pentium® / 1 GHz processor (for example, Pentium® M, Pentium® 4), or equivalent AMD® processor - Faster processors will yield faster performance

1. 512 MB RAM or 1 GB RAM for Windows Vista™
2. 1 GB free hard disk space
3. Microsoft® Windows® XP (SP1 or higher) Home and Professional, 2000 (SP4 or higher), Vista Home Basic or higher (32-bit) addition only.
4. Creative® Labs Sound Blaster® 16 or equivalent sound card supporting 16-bit recording
5. Microsoft® Internet Explorer 5 or higher
6. CD-ROM drive (required for installation)
7. Nuance-approved noise-canceling headset microphone (included)
8. Speakers (required for playback of recorded speech and text to speech features)
9. A web connection is required for activation
10. For Bluetooth wireless microphone support,

During the install process the software checks to make sure your system meets these minimum requirements. If you do not meet the requirements, the software will not be installed.

System specs used for evaluating this program:

1. AMD Athlon 64 Processor, 2.4GHz 3400+
2. 2GBs Ram
3. Windows XP Media Center 2005 with SP2 and all updates.
4. On Board RealTec AC97 Audio 8 bit/16 bit Sound Card
5. Internet Explorer 7.0

Having had previous experience using Dragon Naturally Speaking software, the current version, D.N.S. Preferred version 9.5 was a pleasant surprise. Using a Pentium Pro 200MHz Windows 98 SE computer with 128MBs of ram trying to run versions 3.0 preferred. 3.50 upgrade and later version 5.0 preferred approximately seven years ago, I had all but given up on voice recognition software.

Version 9.5 represents a quantum leap forward and a true break from the past. Not only is the user interface intuitive, responsive and reliable with what I estimate as a maximum dictation accuracy of over 94%, the program's help files are very user friendly.

When installing the software you are prompted to check a box which would allow you to bypass the forced dictation setup. I decided to leave this box unchecked and spend the extra half hour creating the voice learning curve for the program. From previous experience its best for the user to let the software become accustom to **your** particular voice patterns and inflections. Also by going through this phase of the setup, you will substantially improve the programs accuracy. The secret to success with D.N.S. 9 is to talk naturally and maintain a calm composure. Almost everyone who uses voice activated software

for the first time feels a little inhibited, this is a natural tendency and will dissipate over a period of time as you become more accustomed to using the software.

I'm going to classify this type of software as "All or None" software. "All or None, if you don't use it continuously you will never master the program's features and eventually just not use it anymore. Here in lies the problem area for the software. It is intuitive with a high degree of accuracy, but the learning curve and the memorizing of all the commands is very steep. There is no getting around it, you will have to use it continuously or you will never master it. I was asked by our club president, Larry Mobbs, "Do you like the software enough to use it all the time". My guarded answer is yes with one caveat; I personally do very little in the area of word processing. My computer time has been somewhat focused in the area of video creation and editing, web page design beta testing software and computer repair. Yes I will use this program, but in the foreseeable future, my use of voice activated software will be relegated to dictating e-mail, creation of databases and incorporating D.N.S. 9.5 when working with web pages.