



Voice Recognition

Instructors often have a love/hate relationship with technology, but as with most potential distractions, we can help students use technology to their advantage. We can also keep in mind that technologies generally seem problematic when they are first introduced, and we adapt to them over time. In the broadest sense, pencils and paper are a “new technology,” and they can certainly lead to distraction. But, for the most part, we accept this technology because it is familiar to us from our own schooling.

How It Works

For those students who are more comfortable talking than writing and who are not always able – for practical or emotional reasons – to have a conversation at the outset of a writing project, voice recognition software is a godsend. Some of these programs do require initial “training” to recognize particular accents or pronunciations, and they still require careful proofreading to catch grammatical and spelling errors. But the programs improve every year and often help students get words on the page with less pain and anxiety.

Years ago, I recommended that students record their own voices and transcribe what they said, and that technique still works well; but voice recognition software removes the transcription step and is therefore even more efficient. If a student says, “I can say what I mean, but when I try to write it, it comes out all wrong,” that student is a prime candidate for this technique.