

Executive Summary

The Livescribe Smartpen is a small computer in the shape of a pen that can record and synchronise handwritten notes and audio using special dotted paper. Once transferred, notes can be replayed, saved, searched and shared with other users via email, Gogledocs, Facebook or the Livescribe Desktop.

The Livescribe Smartpen could be useful for both, students and professionals. As an educational tool, it could facilitate mobile learning and add value to the learning experience of students. It could also be useful for staff whose roles involve taking minutes or keeping records of confidential meetings.

Product Overview

The Livescribe Smartpen is operated in the same way as a regular ballpoint pen. Recorded notes and audio (pencasts) can be stored or transferred to a computer using a standard micro-USB cable. They can also be shared via the online desktop, webpages or distributed via email, Gogledocs or Facebook. Because pencasts can be uploaded as Flash movies they can be seen by anyone who has the free Adobe Flash Player installed on their computer, even if they are not Livescribe Smartpen users.

The Livescribe Smartpen comes in two models: Echo and Pulse. Echo has 4GB and 8GB versions that can record 400-800 hours of audio. Pulse comes in 2GB and 4GB versions and can record 200-400 hours of audio. Prices are relatively low, ranging from £80 -180 pounds for the Smartpen and £15 pounds for four A5 dotted notepads. They are widely available through Amazon and other suppliers.

Additional tools

- Livescribe Online Desktop – registered users receive 500MB of personal web space and a personal profile to upload, save and share their files. The online desktop also provides access to the Application Store.
- Livescribe Application Store - free and paid applications can be downloaded. Applications include a selection of productivity tools such as handwriting recognition, foreign languages tools, translation tools, travel phrases, calculator, classical music, games and entertainment.
- MyScript - the Smartpen supports a piece of handwriting recognition software that converts ink handwriting into text in 26 languages. The text can be copied into multiple applications including MS Word, email and text files. This application is not part of the standard package but it can be purchased for a small fee.

Recommendations

We advise that the Smartpen could be used by academic and professional staff in the following situations:

1. Staff in charge of taking minutes at relevant meetings university wide
2. Staff based on departments such as Human Resources, Legal Services, members of disciplinary committees or secretaries of governance bodies that for legal reasons need to keep records of confidential meetings

The Smartpen could also be valuable as an educational tool. It could be used in the classroom as a teaching aid to support mobile learning and improve the personal productivity of certain students, for example:

3. Teaching staff working with international students, e.g.: English for International Students Unit (EISU) could find it useful to support international students whose mother tongue is not English. Using the Smartpen to record and replay audio linked to their lecture notes could help international students improve their listening and comprehension skills.
4. Language tutors in Modern Languages might find the Smartpen could help students learning a second language as they could benefit from the record and replay function to improve listening and pronunciation skills. The translation application could also be used to improve reading comprehension.
5. The Smartpen could also be valuable as a discreet accessibility aid for students with special needs.

Legal issues recording conversations and lectures

Similar to using cameras, mobile phones, digital voice recorders or other electronic devices, the users of a Smartpen have a responsibility to behave ethically, follow the right procedures and get appropriate consent before recording a session.

Further Information

If you have any questions or comments regarding this product, please contact IT Services.