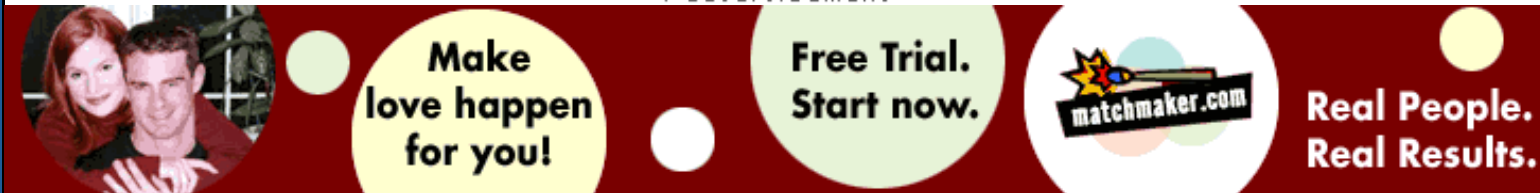


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## OFFICE SUITES & PRODUCTIVITY



# Dragon Systems NaturallySpeaking Preferred 6.0



#### EDITORS' RATING



#### USER RATINGS

Overall score: 7.7 (13 votes)

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#### ZDNet Review

April 4, 2002

Five months after a near-death experience, Dragon NaturallySpeaking is back, and this time, it's better than ever. When ScanSoft bought Dragon from Lernout & Hauspie, it resurrected the powerful speech recognition program, then refined it. Now, NaturallySpeaking 6.0's dictation accuracy beats even [IBM ViaVoice 9.0's](#). And Dragon's app works so smoothly with Microsoft Word, we experienced no noticeable delay in the program's speech-to-text transcriptions. No matter what your voice recognition task, at home or at work, turn to NaturallySpeaking Preferred 6.0 first.

Editors' Rating	9.0
Performance	10
Service and support	7
Ease of Use	9
Feature Set	10
<a href="#">▶ How we score</a>	

#### Easy installation; fast training

Before you install NaturallySpeaking, make sure your machine can handle resource-draining speech software in the first place. NaturallySpeaking 6.0 recommends a minimum processor speed of 400MHz. For really fast transcriptions, however, we recommend 800MHz. At that speed, we experienced virtually no delay between talking and seeing the text onscreen. Make sure you have at least 128MB of RAM, too. (ViaVoice also runs like the wind on fast systems, by the way.)

As with all such software, you'll have to train NaturallySpeaking to understand the nuances of your own voice. In our tests, it took only about 20 minutes to install and train NaturallySpeaking. (ViaVoice's install/training process took 10 minutes longer.) Next, the Audio Setup Wizard quickly adjusts the basic microphone that comes with the program.

Once you finish the setup and launch the program, a simple toolbar that turns the microphone on or off appears on your screen and lets you access program menus. Now, just dictate into any active window. We tried dictating into apps such as Word 2002 and Quicken and had no trouble at all.

#### Nails dictation 95 percent of the time

NaturallySpeaking 6.0's much-improved accuracy is impressive. In our tests--in which we dictated a

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newspaper story, an e-mail message, and a business letter--Dragon scored an impressive 95 percent, meaning it misread only 5 out of every 100 words. That's slightly better than ViaVoice's 92 percent accuracy rate and much better than NaturallySpeaking 5.0's 85 percent.

Less impressive is NaturallySpeaking's new Nothing But Speech feature, which is supposed to filter out *ums* and *ahs*. When we deliberately hemmed and hawed during our dictation, Dragon didn't delete the extraneous sounds. Instead, it transcribed our mumblings as everything from *a* to *and* to *in*.

### Voice navigation that works...most of the time

As for navigation, NaturallySpeaking gives you better command of and control over Windows and other popular applications--such as Microsoft Word, Excel, Outlook Express, Eudora, and AOL--than ever before. It lets you launch programs verbally, but you can control your apps with plain-English commands such as "Click File" or "Select the next sentence." Want hands-free Web browsing? Dragon has you covered. The program lets you click a link on a page in Internet Explorer by reading the link's first few words. If there are multiple possibilities, Dragon numbers each link, and you simply say the number. NaturallySpeaking also responds to commands such as "Scroll down" or "Back." Unfortunately, you still can't read the personalized links you save on IE's Links toolbar. And NaturallySpeaking doesn't work with any Netscape browser.

### No robot here

As in previous versions, NaturallySpeaking's enhanced text-to-speech engine speaks in a realistic voice. The big difference: the voice finally sounds more human than robotic. To activate the engine, just select text or place your cursor at a spot, say "Read this," and Dragon will read from that point.



### First-rate support

It's not easy to find tech support for NaturallySpeaking. Don't bother clicking Support at ScanSoft's Web site; instead, go to the Lernout & Hauspie site. There you can browse, but not search, a long list of online FAQs or e-mail a question. However, we had better luck posting messages on the user forum. You can also access telephone support on weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. We reached a rep in seconds, and she gave us the right info without any trouble. Unfortunately, only the first call is free. After that you must pay \$20 per call.

When it comes to speech recognition, speed and accuracy are paramount, and that's where NaturallySpeaking Preferred 6.0 surpasses our former pick, IBM ViaVoice 9.0. If you want to talk rather than type, this resurrected program is the one to get.

- by Gregg Keizer

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