

Easily Accessible Dictation Software

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I've never really given much consideration to dictation software before. I'm the kind of person who likes to think as I type and I feel like if I'm dictating something then I'm breaking the concentration I like to have when I'm writing. However recently, I had some clients who I was helping to setup their new computers and they were very keen to explore dictation software because they were very slow typists and they wanted to be able to get their memoirs down.

So I helped them to find a solution that worked for them. This ended up being the built-in dictation software in Mac OS that is powered by Siri. But I realised that there are quite a number of options for dictation software now that are either part of software you might own anyway or are free to use. So I decided to put a few of these through their paces for your benefit.

To compare these different software packages, I dictated the first passage of *The Man From Snowy River*, which for those unfamiliar, is as follows:

There was movement at the station, for the word had passed around

That the colt from old Regret had got away,

And had joined the wild bush horses - he was worth a thousand pound,

So all the cracks had gathered to the fray.

All the tried and noted riders from the stations near and far

Had mustered at the homestead overnight,

For the bushmen love hard riding where the wild bush horses are,

And the stockhorse snuffs the battle with delight.

Microsoft 365

First cab off the rank was the dictation software built into the Microsoft 365 versions of Microsoft Office (in other words this feature is not found in the versions with a perpetual licence such as Office 2021, only the subscription versions which cost \$99 or \$129 per year:

There was movement at the station are word passed around that the coach from old address had got away Hannah join the wild Bush horses he was worth 1000 pounds so all the cracks had gathered to the fray all the Triton noted writers from the stations near and far add mustard at the homestead overnight for the

bushmen love hard riding where the wild Bush horses are and the stock horse last a battle with delight

MacOS/iPadOS

MacOS and iPadOS, being closely related Apple operating systems, both feature the same dictation software. In Mac OS it can be turned on by going to the Apple Menu, System Settings, Keyboard and turning on Dictation. Then no matter what application you go to type in, you'll see a microphone icon appear. You can click this to begin dictating.

On an iPad, you can go to Settings, Keyboard and turn on Dictation. You'll then see a microphone icon on your on screen keyboard that you can tap to begin dictating.

Here's how Siri does with Banjo Patterson's iconic poem:

There was movement station for the word past around. That's the code for mould of Ratan got away and enjoying the wild bush horses. He was worth £1000 so all the cracks it gonna do the fray will try to noted Rasmus stations near and far add mustard at the Homestead overnight for the bushman love heart rate in where the wild bush by SZA and the stock or snuff the battle with the lies.

Google Docs

As long as you have a Google account (and remember as a Melbourne PC User Group member you automatically have one) you can use the dictation software built into Google Docs for free. You have to use Google Chrome for this feature to work, but that's the only catch that I could see. To enable it, once you have a Google Doc open, just go to Tools, Voice Typing or press Ctrl + Shift + S.

Here's how Google did:

There was movement at the station for the word is passed around that the colt no Greta got away and a join the Wildwood horses he was worth 1000 pound so all the cracks add gutter to the frame all the tried and noted riders from the stations near and far add mustard at home that overnight all the Bushman love hard riding where the wild bush horses are and the stock horse snuffs the battle with the life.

Ultimately, none of them were terrific at dictating the poem, but for one thing, what you'll dictate is unlikely to be as complex in sentence structure as The Man from Snowy River and with time you'll learn the nuances of whichever system you pick and you'll get quite a good result I think. So if you're like my clients and are thinking of getting down your memoirs or undertaking some other kind of major writing project, then maybe you should give one of these a go?