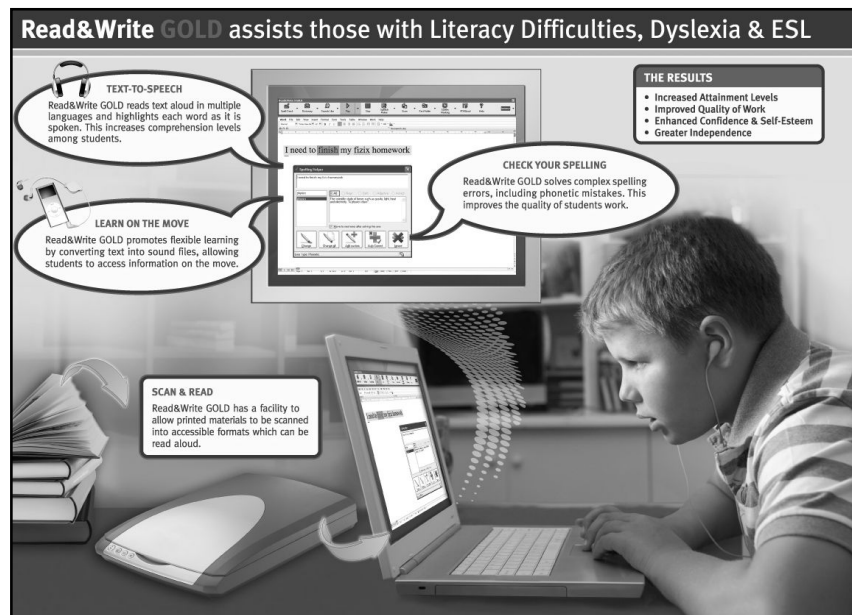


Are you teaching students with literacy problems?

Assistive technology can help in the classroom.

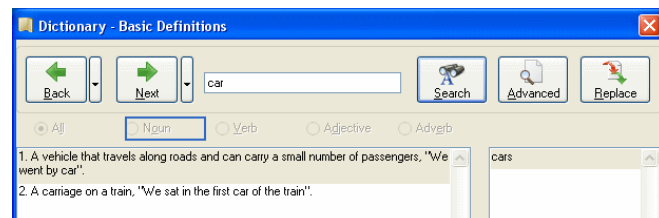
By Jo Evans (jo.evans@edsoft.com.au) and Yvonne Lynch

Programs such as TextHELP Read&Write Gold can give enormous support to those students who struggle with reading and writing. Program functions include converting text to speech and MP3 files, phonetic spell checking and homophone help, word prediction and collection of highlighted main points. Support of this kind can empower reluctant readers and writers to edit their work more effectively. Hand held spellcheckers and voice recognition programs such as Dragon Naturally Speaking can also give struggling students the tools to better cope with learning tasks today and tomorrow.



Texthelp – Read&Write 9 Gold

Texthelp's Read&Write 9 Gold is a discreet integrated solution comprising of many functions which are designed to assist people who need extra help with reading and writing. Unique functionalities incorporated into the package include a text-to-speech tool, a word predictor, a speaking dictionary and calculator, scanning function and PDFaloud.



Speech Read&Write 9 GOLD's text-to-speech features offer a simple and accurate way to read documents. The software will read text aloud including websites, PDF documents, Word documents and any other text on screen by word, sentence or paragraph. Selected text can also be spoken aloud as the User types.

Words are highlighted as they are spoken for audio-visual reinforcement, increasing word recognition levels.

How is this useful?

Users with literacy difficulties are likely to suffer major problems when reading. Read&Write 9 GOLD goes some way to minimising barriers to learning as every piece of text can be speech enabled. The result of this is that Users do not have to struggle to comprehend written information as they can have the text played back to them in an audio format. This audio-visual reinforcement allows struggling users to develop their literacy skills.

The speech facility can also be used by people for whom English is their second language (ESL). Users are likely to find it easier to learn English when using this system as the words can be read and spoken simultaneously. This again acts as a reinforcement measure as the User develops their understanding of the spelling of the words, while also learning how the words are spoken.

Speech to Audio format

Read&Write 9 GOLD allows the conversion of text to MP3, WMA or WAV files.

This feature is ideal for revising work at the end of the day on the way home from school, college or work. The playback voice can be adjusted to suit the individual's needs.

The audible text in Read&Write 9 GOLD can be saved directly to the User's media player.

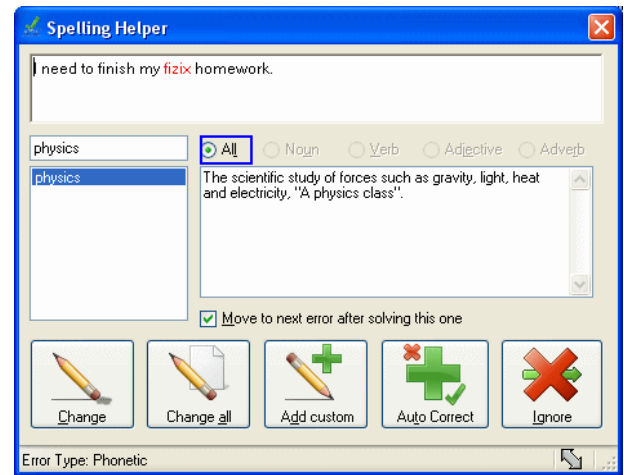
Being able to listen to information instead of having to read it is easier for those with learning difficulties. Listening is a key element of multi-sensory learning.

Spelling

Read&Write 9 GOLD has an enhanced Phonetic Spell Checker to analyse and correct even more spelling mistakes than before. The User can choose to check spelling as they type or check their completed document. Spelling mistakes will be identified and the Spelling Helper window will provide a list of suggested corrections with the meanings of each to aid the correct choice.

The Phonetic Spell Checker assists the User in correcting the most complex of errors. Colour coded identification of errors helps the User to identify their mistakes.

This feature provides literacy support for Users with learning difficulties as all spelling suggestions and dictionary definitions can be read aloud. An error log gives the educator the opportunity to monitor an individual User's progress.



Homophones

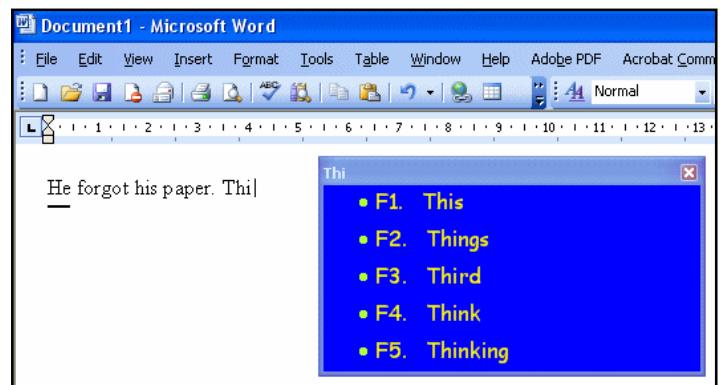
Read&Write 9 GOLD has an improved homophone database with the option to select from basic or advanced homophone suggestions. By identifying and providing audible definitions of homophones, Read&Write 9 GOLD software ensures that each User identifies the correct word in the correct context.

Word Prediction

This feature enables the User to develop their writing skills by providing the tools to construct sentences with ease. As the User types, a list of suggestions will appear in the Prediction Panel. Subject specific or industry related vocabulary can be added to the prediction database to enhance the User experience.

The Read&Write 9 GOLD Word Predictor learns the User's style of writing and predicts the word they want to use next. The prediction database has been enhanced with many more new words and improvements have been made to the speed of processing and suggestion accuracy.

Providing Users with word suggestions as they write helps them to complete their work with greater efficiency and accuracy. Word prediction ensures that Users do not become lost for words or stuck in the middle of the sentence. The feature can be particularly advantageous for Users who have a small vocabulary, or for foreign language speakers, as definitions of the words can be spoken directly from the dictionary.



Study Skills

The Study Skills Toolbar in Read&Write 9 GOLD is an additional toolbar where sections of text can be highlighted and collated together to produce study notes.

Often when reading notes, books or journals we use coloured markers to highlight pieces of text, which are of particular relevance to the subject we are studying. With the Study Skills Toolbar in Read&Write 9 GOLD this same ability is brought to the computer. It can be used within Microsoft Word or Internet Explorer. The Study Skills toolbar can now be used to collect highlights from previously highlighted documents which have been saved.

Within the Study Skills Toolbar, there is also a Summarise tool. This can be used within any Windows based application. The User simply highlights the text they want to summarise and clicks on the Summarise icon, choosing what percentage of the text they want in their summary. The summary is transferred into a new Word document, within which the User can alter the percentage further.

Examples of Dictionaries and Recorders

[Franklin DMQ-1870 Speaking Dictionary](#)

Portable dictionary/thesaurus with phonetic spell checker and speech.

This portable phonetic spell checker and dictionary contains over 500,000 definitions



[Olympus DS-40 digital voice recorder](#)

The Olympus DS-40 – a small, stylishly designed, disability conscious, high quality, digital voice recorder (DVR).

The sleek, silver Olympus DS-40 digital voice recorder allows up to **136 hours** of recording in WMA format

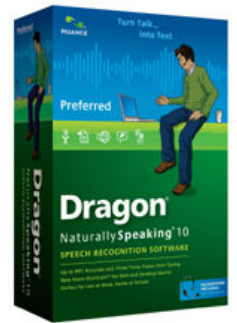


Dragon Naturally Speaking Preferred 10 Software

Manufacturer/Publisher: [Nuance \(formally Scansoft\)](#)

Dragon NaturallySpeaking 10 Preferred speech recognition software is used to create documents, reports and emails.

Speech Recognition software provides people with dyslexia and other disabilities the freedom to write and control their computer with their voice. With perfect spelling and audio feedback it enables the user to get their thoughts down quickly and easily enables professional, correctly spelt documents. Email, documents and spreadsheets can be created three times faster than most people type with exceptional accuracy - simply by speaking. Most people speak over 120 words per minute, but type less than 40 words a minute. Speech recognition software is ideal for those with mobility problems such as dyspraxia or RSI as voice controls can be used to move around the computer.



Custom words such as proper names can be added to Dragon NaturallySpeaking's vocabulary. Should Dragon misunderstand your pronunciation you can train it to know what you wanted to write. Dragon NaturallySpeaking never makes a spelling mistake; it just gets smarter the more you use it therefore making it an excellent solution for people who have dyslexia or similar writing difficulty and want to produce professional, correctly spelt documents. Correction is made easy using the 'play back' feature, so you can listen to your dictation whilst Dragon highlights the corresponding text on the screen for accessible proofing.

You can use your voice to dictate, edit and control applications such as Microsoft Word, Microsoft Outlook Express and Microsoft Internet Explorer.

You can even work whilst on the move by dictating into a recommended digital voice recorder. Your recordings will automatically be transcribed when you have connected with your PC.

<http://www.texthelp.com/page.asp>

<http://www.dyslexic.com/dragon>