

Ability Newsletter

Product and Service News

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Targus Compact USB Keyboard

Low cost option

There are many compact keyboards now on the market, including some that offer wireless connection. This model, from Targus, has one distinct advantage: it costs \$28 inc.

Its keys are standard size, but the keyboard itself is only 35.5 x 16 x 2.5 cm, and weighs 454g. It also comes with pre-programmed hotkeys for internet and email.



Backlit keyboard

An interesting idea. This keyboard has a gentle blue glow, enabling access in poor light situations. It also has silent membrane key switches, for quiet typing.

Dimensions are 32.4 x 15.4 x 2.4 cm. It weighs 570g. PS/2 only.

The cost is \$69 inc.



Computer Access

SmartNAV Voice Clicking

This is an inexpensive add-on for SmartNAV users. Instead of using a switch or dwell-clicking, users can issue mouse control functions by voice. Commands available are:

Mouse:

Left down - left button down
 Left up - left button up
 Left click - left button down and up
 Right down - right button down
 Right up - right button up
 Right click - right button down and up
 Middle down - middle button down
 Middle up - middle button up
 Middle click - middle button down and up
 Double click - left button up/down twice
 Enter - presses the enter key

Hotkeys:

Precision - start / stop precision mode
 Scroll - start / stop scrolling
 Pause - start / stop pause mode
 Center - center the cursor (said only once)
 Activate - used in key activation mode to start / stop mode

These speech commands can be modified to be whatever word you choose.

Our testing showed that the voice commands worked reasonably well. Two issues to consider are:

1. It can be difficult not to move your head when you are speaking commands. Try it! This means your command to "Left Click" for example, may be ineffective because you have moved the cursor to a different place.
2. Many people use SmartNAV with speech recognition software such as Dragon Naturally Speaking. You will need to turn off the microphone for speech recognition while you are issuing Voice Clicking commands.

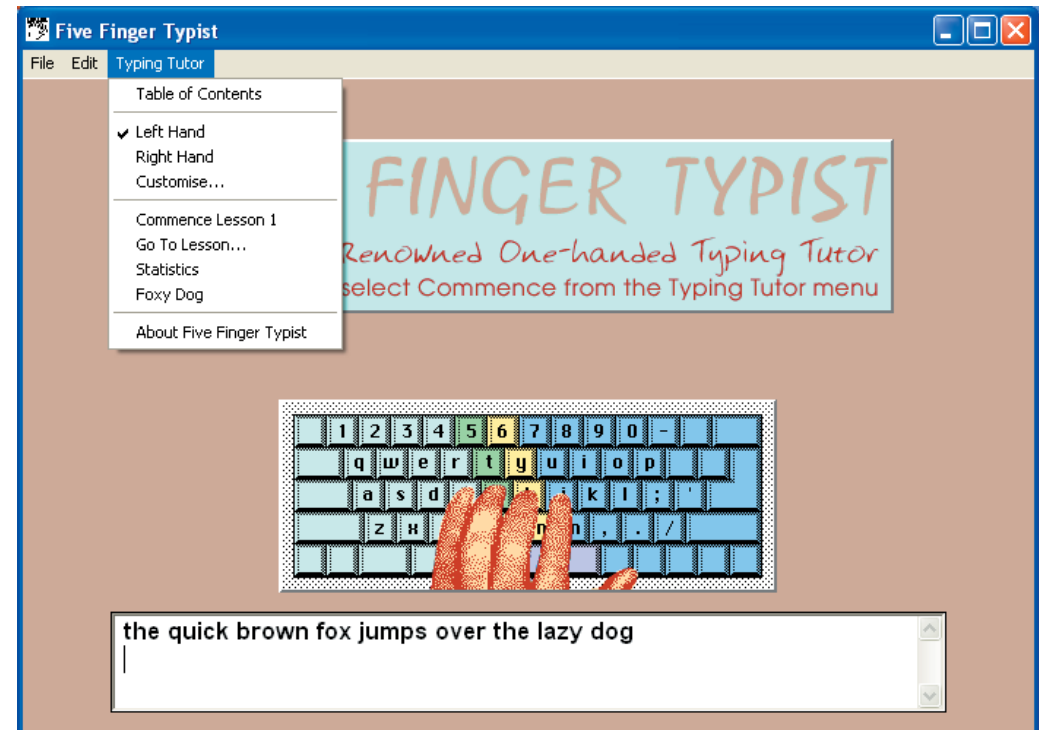


Computer Access

Five Finger Typist

NEW! Version 2.0 for Windows contains:

- A coloured resizeable main window, with the on-screen keyboard coloured in bands to show the keys typed with each finger.
- A new "Customise..." menu item allows customisation of Five Finger Typist in a number of ways which may assist in the learning process:
 - 3 screen font sizes can be chosen - standard, medium or large
 - typing sounds can be turned on - either the key typed is spoken, or a typewriter sound is made when you type
 - a typing-error sound can be chosen,
- Saving to a progress file saves the main window size, hand chosen, lesson, font size, typing sound and error sound so you can start your next session with the same settings.



Five Finger Typist runs under Windows XP, 2000, NT4 and 95+ and on Macintosh computers. Version 2.0 for Mac OS X coming soon.

The cost is \$99, with a 5 licence pack for \$295.



Handhelds

VoiceNavIt

VoiceNavIt can launch applications and execute a series of commands with keystrokes or stylus actions through voice commands.

It is the first application for the PalmOS that allows custom personalisation of the Palm Treo 600, 650 smartphone or LifeDrive mobile manager with the time management capability of macros (or shortcuts). With VoiceNavIt, you can launch any application and execute a series of commands (keystrokes or stylus actions). The voice command and control plus system-wide macro recording and playback inside of VoiceNavIt gives you the capabilities of voice navigation execution for common tasks such as speeding up text entry and automating the execution of a series of actions.

We are still waiting for speech recognition for handhelds and also more comprehensive text-to-speech software.

Meanwhile, the range of applications available at this level of computing is growing rapidly. They include word processing, accounts, GPS, voice phone dialling, MP3 playback, FM radio, WiFi connection, internet, email, database, calculator and digital camera.



Games

Game Box Controller

This new device from RJ Cooper in the US will be of great interest to many readers. The joystick is similar in size to that on a powered wheelchair and the buttons are large. Switch jacks are provided for all of the buttons, including the START button.

The corded version works on the XBox, PS2, PSone and Game Cube. It costs US \$99. A cordless version is available for the XBox, PS2/PSone, for US \$129. A separate model for the XBox 360 is available for US \$149. Order direct at www.rjcooper.com



Utility

Sci-Plus 300 Talking scientific calculator

The features of this product, developed by ORTC in Canada, are:

- * A large very clear high contrast 8 digit LCD display
- * A very clearly audible voice from the earphone socket
- * Rugged portable case (9" x 6" x 1.3") 22.5 x 15.2 x 3.5cm
- * Enlarged High Visibility Keypad with 2cm Keys with positive action
- * Colour differentiated operation keys
- * Large print spiral bound users manual
- * Providing all essential mathematical, trigonometric and scientific calculations and fractions

Sells for US \$325 at various outlets.



Phone Control

Hands Free Mobile Desk Stand

This stand enables a person to use voice commands and a switch (not included) to answer calls and dial prestored numbers on a mobile phone. The portable stand has a built-in speaker and can be used on a desk or wheelchair tray.

The switch is used to turn on voice dialling, to answer calls or to hang up. Or if the phone has a "magic word" activation of voice dialling, then you can use that. It powers from the phone itself, so no separate power source is required.

It has been tested with the Sony Ericsson K700i and T610. Other phones may also be compatible (check the Sony Ericsson web site).

The cost of the version modified for switch access is \$150.



Bluetooth Switch Interface for Mobiles

Many mobile phones now have bluetooth capability. This enables bluetooth headsets and speakers to be used. Switch adaptation adds further functionality for users with a disability. You press the switch (not included) once to answer the phone and again to hang up. You can press it once (when it is not ringing) to enter voice dial mode.

This device sells for \$319.



Ability Services

What we do at Ability Technology

Ability Technology assists people with a disability to be more productive through computer and related technology. Our services include giving advice, assessing needs for special hardware and software, supplying and customising technology and providing training and support. We are experienced in integrating specialised technology into company or school networks.

Ability is the leading provider of specialised technology reports in personal injury and medical negligence cases. We are actively involved in the employment, education, aged care and disability sectors - wherever people with a disability can become more independent and productive through modern computer-related technology. This technology includes environmental control (home automation), communication and multi-sensory environments.

Our solutions cover all disability types (apart from vision impairment). They include innovative solutions for people with brain injury as well as for people with physical disabilities. Solutions include alternative keyboards and mouse devices, speech recognition, literacy software and much more.



Some of these services can be provided through state-of-the-art remote access software and web cam, thus making them available to organisations and individuals in remote areas.

Ability Technology has over 15 years experience in this field. Our expertise is nourished by extensive research and product testing. Our team includes occupational therapists, technical staff and administrative support. We employ people with a disability. Ability Technology is a charity.

Please contact us for more information on any of our services.



Ability Services

Ability Activities

University Course

We are nearing the end of our pioneering course in assistive technology for final year occupational therapy students at the University of Sydney. We are enjoying the course and the opportunity to pass on our experiences to these students. We have had some great guest speakers (thanks to Andrew Downie, Leigh Lockrey and Greg Killeen) and some visits (to Vision Australia, Nothcott Society, The Spastic centre and, of course, Ability Technology).

Trips

Lynda and Lucy are heading north for the **Spectronics Winter School** (23-25 May) at the Gold Coast. When they return, Graeme heads to the Gold Coast to speak at the **Brain Injury Australia National Conference** (31 May - 2 June). He is also Moderator for a technology session at the **Re: Connections Forum**, arranged by the Ministry for Science and Medical Research, on 29 May. Lynda and Graeme then head off to Melbourne on June 13 for a series of assessments and meetings.

TechAssist Project

This project, whereby we can provide remote support, advice and training using Citrix *GoToAssist* software, is in full swing. We are keen to hear from students, teachers and parents especially. The service is FREE for the next few months.

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