

Livescribe Pulse Smartpen

Record audio in sync with your notetaking.

Dubbed a smartpen, the Livescribe Pulse adds loads of features to a once one-trick pony.

Aimed at students and professionals, it captures what you write and what you hear simultaneously and synchronizes the two, so when you tap a particular word in your notes, you can hear what was being said when you wrote it.

The Pulse, about 6 inches long, is the size and weight of a highlighter. It has a ballpoint cartridge and includes three refills of black ink and a stylus tip. On its spine is a 96 x 18-pixel OLED display and a power button above it.

For the Pulse to record your pen strokes, you must write on the included digital paper, which has a background of tiny dots. A small infrared camera above the pen point visually records your strokes across this digital paper and stores it in the pen's 2GB of internal memory (which can hold up to 32,000 pages of text). Included with the pen is a 100-sheet college-ruled notebook of digital paper; notebooks come in packs of four for \$19.95 per pack.

To record audio, you have to press the Record

circle printed on the bottom of the page. Three audio-sensitivity settings are available: Conference room, Lecture hall, and Automatic. The Pulse also comes with a 3D recording headset. If you are wearing the headset, the pen records from both mics, resulting in a surround-sound recording.

You can play back recordings by tapping the pen to the paper where you've written something or look at your synchronized notes and audio using the Livescribe Desktop program, downloadable at www.livescribe.com. The program lets you upload your notes to the Internet to share with friends.

Other features inside the included notebook are on a page of interactive controls; a calculator, bookmarks, and controls for replay, playback speed, and volume. The menu-navigator arrows let you control the Pulse's main menu, which includes recording options.

You can charge the pen through the computer or an AC adapter (\$14.95; not included). Battery life was very good; frequent use of the pen during a week-long testing period didn't require a recharge.

The Livescribe Pulse smartpen works as promised. And the sound quality is superb for such a small device. But those looking for a digital pen that will turn your handwriting into editable text should consider the Logitech

io2 Digital Pen or Logitech's Digital Scribe. However, those models don't offer additional features, such as the Pulse's calculator.

—Joanna Stern



Livescribe

\$149 (1GB), \$199 (2GB)

★★★★☆

www.livescribe.com

PROS

Records audio in sync with writing
Many built-in features
Long battery life
Innovative controls and tools

CONS

Requires special dotted paper
No included OCR software