



## Starting to Dictate: Your First Dictation

You can use Dragon NaturallySpeaking to dictate into virtually any Windows application. Further in this workbook, you will learn how to start programs by voice (but one doesn't need to have started a program by voice in order to dictate into it.)

What you dictate will be inserted wherever your *insertion point* (cursor) is located in your document. There are many ways of moving the insertion point by voice, but know that you can also re-position it by hand (clicking the mouse where you want it, or using your keyboard's arrow keys) just as you normally would.

**TIP** Before dictating, make sure the desired window is *active* (its *title bar* should not be dimmed), and the insertion point is where you want your dictation to appear. (Your operating system can make such visual elements easier to see; Windows XP's Accessibility Wizard, under Start>Programs>Accessories, walks you through various items that can be helpful, such as increasing the thickness of the insertion point.)

### Dictating Text and Punctuation Marks

Here are the most common punctuation marks, followed by what you say to "voice-type" them:

.	period	!	exclamation point <i>or</i> exclamation mark
,	comma	:	colon
?	question mark	;	semi-colon

For these exercises, start a word processor (like DragonPad—say **start DragonPad**).

**Exercise 1:** Look at the following sample, dictate it, then say **microphone off**. (If any word is misrecognized, ignore it for now.) The very first words may take a moment to appear on the screen; this is normal.

How is this different from dictating to a person? I should try to provide clean input: speaking naturally, but without mumbling or trailing off!
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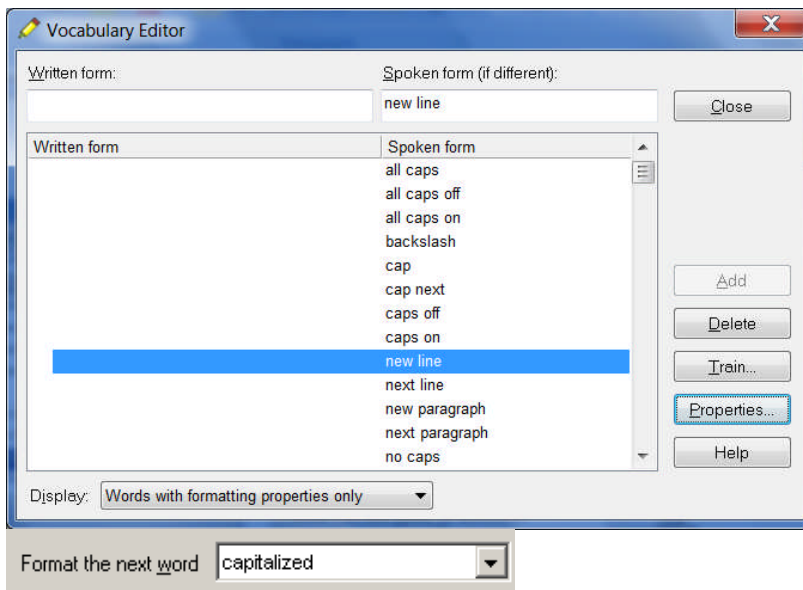
**CAUTION** Do turn off your microphone when you finish dictating! If your last sentence reads something like "trailing off! Microphone off", you probably forgot to pause briefly before giving the command.

### New Line and New Paragraph

When typing, you use your Enter key to start a new line or new paragraph. With Dragon active, you can still press your Enter key (or any other key on your keyboard), but you can also simply say commands like **new line** or **new paragraph**.

Note: When you start dictating your new paragraph, Dragon will capitalize its first letter automatically, just like it automatically capitalizes after a period, an exclamation point, or a question mark. By default, Dragon does NOT capitalize the first word after you say the command **new line**.

**TIP** If you prefer **new line** to trigger capitalization, you can change its default via the *Vocabulary Editor*, since **new line** belongs to a special group of commands accessible there; these so-called *dictation commands*, such as “Cap”, “Caps On” and “Numeral”, appear near the very top of the Vocabulary Editor’s list, with a blank Written Form field. To find them quickly, change the Display drop-down list to “Word with spoken forms only”. Once you’ve highlighted **new line** in the Vocabulary Editor, say or click **Properties**, then choose “capitalized” from the drop-down list “Format the next word”.



## The Results Display and its Options

**Exercise 2:** Study the following text sample then dictate it in a blank document. (Ignore any errors for now.)

The more I use it, the software will adapt to the way I sound and the words I use. At the same time, I will also acquire good habits like pausing optimally, keeping silent when hesitating, and turning the microphone off, or putting it into its sleep state, when necessary!

A small “rolling” Dragon icon appears as you dictate; this indicates that recognition is in progress.



If the option “show preliminary results” is enabled (on the View tab of the Options dialog), you will instead see the following, as in version 10 and prior:

- Your words first appear in a small horizontal rectangle. This is called the *Results Box*.

- Words accumulate in the Results Box until you pause, at which point they appear in your document. If many words are dictated without a pause, the Results box automatically stretches out.
- The contents of the Results Box sometimes change as you speak; what first appears there may not be what is inserted in your document, since Dragon sometimes revises its original guess based on subsequent words.

Dragon uses the everything it hears between two pauses to best choose what exactly it should transcribe; this is particularly important for words that can be spelled in different ways, like “to” and “too”. If you speak single words, or only a few words at a time, the software has few or no contextual clues. For this reason, long continuous “utterances” can be recognized more accurately than short ones (and long words better than short ones).

**IMPORTANT** Try to formulate your sentences and commands *before you start dictating them*. This can be challenging at first, particularly for those who have been “thinking through their fingers” for years, but you’ll develop the habit once you see what a difference it makes.

**Exercise 3:** Dictate a paragraph of some four sentences on today’s weather. (For now, ignore any errors.)

Did you forget to dictate punctuation in this paragraph? It can be harder to remember when we are “composing out loud” but, with practice, it will become second nature.

**TIP** You can take advantage of Dragon’s option to automatically insert **commas and periods** as you dictate—see Auto-Formatting under the DragonBar’s Tools menu. The Help contains details about this “Natural Punctuation” option and the commands to turn it on and off.

**IMPORTANT:** The location and behavior of the Results indicator can be customized from the Options dialog’s View tab. Many users find it most convenient to “anchor” the indicator to a place where it’s unlikely to hide anything, such as the bottom right corner of their screen; to do that, just check the “Anchor” checkbox, close the Options dialog, then drag the indicator to the desired place.

Below are other frequent punctuation marks—you may want to say them out loud once before the next exercise. Note in particular the ellipsis and the difference between **dash** and **hyphen**.

Remember that you can use the Vocabulary Editor to see punctuation and symbols with their existing spoken forms, as well as to add your own spoken forms, and to modify properties (such as “having no following space” like the open quote.)

“	open quote	...	ellipsis <i>or</i> dot dot dot
”	close quote	&	ampersand <i>or</i> and sign
(	open paren <i>or</i> open parenthesis	--	dash
)	close paren <i>or</i> close parenthesis	-	hyphen

**TIP** You don't always have to say hyphens: thanks to its built-in Vocabulary, Dragon can automatically include hyphens in items such as 3-year-old, above-mentioned, after-tax, ad-libbed, ankle-length, anti-infective, as well as famous hyphenated names like Abdul-Jabbar. (To see many, you can choose "Words containing punctuation" in the Vocabulary Editor's dropdown list "Display".)

You can *prevent* Dragon from entering a hyphen by pausing or saying "spacebar" where the hyphen would be.

**Exercise 4:** Dictate the following sample (if any recognition errors occur, ignore them for now.)

These lessons remind me that "practice makes perfect." (Who said this, Confucius?)  
When it comes to speech-recognition software, truer words were never spoken...

**TIP** At the moment when one turns off its microphone off, Dragon may still be working on the last sounds it heard. Be patient—remember, this is an on/off toggle, so pressing the microphone hotkey again would actually tell Dragon to wake up.

### Key points for your first dictation:

- ✓ What you dictate is transcribed at the *insertion point* (the blinking vertical bar), the place where characters would appear if you started to type. (Before you dictate, make sure that the desired window is not just visible, but also has the focus.)
- ✓ To modify how Dragon indicates that recognition is in progress, use the View tab of the Options dialog (to bring up this dialog, you can say "open Dragon options"). To avoid situations where the Results indicator (the little Dragon icon or the stretching box) prevents you from seeing something on your screen, you can "anchor" it (**check the "Anchor" checkbox, then close the Options dialog and drag the indicator to the desired place**). You can also change how long it remains on the screen.
- ✓ Speaking in longer, continuous phrases provides contextual clues and thus helps Dragon choose between *homophones* like "right" and "write" or "to" and "two".
- ✓ Punctuation is part of the dictation context—it has an impact on recognition accuracy.
- ✓ Two very frequent *dictation commands* are **new paragraph** (which creates a blank line) and **new line**.
- ✓ By default, **new line** does NOT trigger capitalization of the following word; you can change that through the Vocabulary Editor's Properties dialog.
- ✓ Your very first dictated words may take a moment to appear on the screen. This is normal.