

Livescribe Pulse Rewrites Note Taking

THE PULSE “smartpen” from Livescribe is part pen, part nothing you’ve ever seen before. The Pulse records sounds through integrated stereo microphones and then creates audio notes that it “ties” to your written notes. The device works with special notebooks and ink cartridges; the paper bears scarcely noticeable dot patterns that provide a reference grid. This allows the pen to jump to specific moments in your note-taking history and play back audio or voice notes recorded at that time.

To record audio while you write, you tap the printed ‘record’ button at the bottom of your sheet of paper. When you’re done recording, you tap ‘stop’. The Pulse records audio with surprising clarity and directional precision; the pen’s on-board microphones performed well in my tests.

Livescribe gives you two ways to play back notes. One is to tap a printed pattern at the bottom of each page, bringing up the menu on the pen’s OLED screen. You then select the day and time of audio to play back. The second way to play back audio is by tapping written notes in your notebook; when you do so, you can hear the audio that was recorded at the exact moment you wrote those notes. This feature is extremely useful for recording short-hand notes and interviews.

Once you plug your pen into its USB cradle and connect it to your PC, you can see a page-by-page archive of your notes. From there you can use the desktop app to listen to and manage your voice recordings. The software is well-designed, but it lacks an optical character recognition mode for converting your hand-writing into text.

The Livescribe Pulse may have limited appeal, but it’s certainly innovative and a whole lot of fun to use.

-Tim Moynihan

The Livescribe Pulse can be purchased at Target Stores. For information and pricing, please visit: http://www.target.com/gp/search/175-7289468-1149942?field-keywords=1gb_livescribe_pulse&LNM=1gb_livescribe_pulse&CPNG=Seasonal&AFID=google&LID=51750449&ref=tgt_adv_XSGO0946