Using Voice Dictation to have your Mac type for you

Macs have voice dictation built-in, allowing you to talk instead of type. This feature functions more like voice dictation on a mobile operating system, and less like the more complicated Speech Recognition feature found in Windows.
OS X Mavericks contains an “Enhanced Dictation” feature. It lets you use Voice Dictation offline and displays text as you speak, so you can see exactly how your speech is being interpreted.

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Set Up Enhanced Dictation

First, you’ll need to enable the Dictation feature. Click the Apple menu at the top of your screen and select System Preferences. Click the Dictation & Speech icon in the System Preferences pane and ensure Dictation is set to On.

Enable the Enhanced Dictation option and your Mac will download the appropriate dictionary from Apple’s servers. It will then be able to interpret your voice offline. If you don’t enable Enhanced Dictation, your speech will be sent to Apple’s servers and interpreted there.
You’re also free to customize your dictation shortcut and which microphone dictation uses from here. The purple microphone will light up as you speak if your Mac can hear you.

Using Voice Dictation

To use voice dictation in an application on your Mac, first select a text field in an application. Next, press the Fn (Function) key twice or click the Edit menu and select Start Dictation.
Speak to your Mac and the words you speak will start appearing in the text field. If you’ve set up Enhanced Dictation, they’ll appear immediately. If you haven’t, you’ll have to click Done or press the fn key again and your voice will be sent to Apple’s servers, where it’s interpreted and the text is filled into your application. You can only speak for up to 30 seconds each time if you haven’t set up Enhanced Dictation.

The purple indicator on the microphone should move as you speak. If it doesn’t, your Mac can’t hear you. You’ll need to reposition your microphone or configure which microphone is used from the Dictation pane.
When you’re done dictating, tap the FN key again or click Done to make your Mac stop listening to you.

Dictation Commands

Like on other operating systems, Voice Dictation won’t automatically fill in the appropriate punctuation marks as you speak a sentence normally. You’ll need to speak the punctuation marks you want to type. For example, to type “I’m doing well. How are you doing?”, you’d have to say “I’m doing well period how are you doing question mark.”
Whereas the Windows Speech Recognition feature is extremely powerful and complicated, the Mac Voice Dictation feature is more streamlined and simplified. It’s easy to start using without a long training process and will feel familiar to people who’ve used voice dictation on smartphones and tablets. In fact, it’s extremely similar to the voice dictation feature on Apple’s iOS.

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