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Penfriend

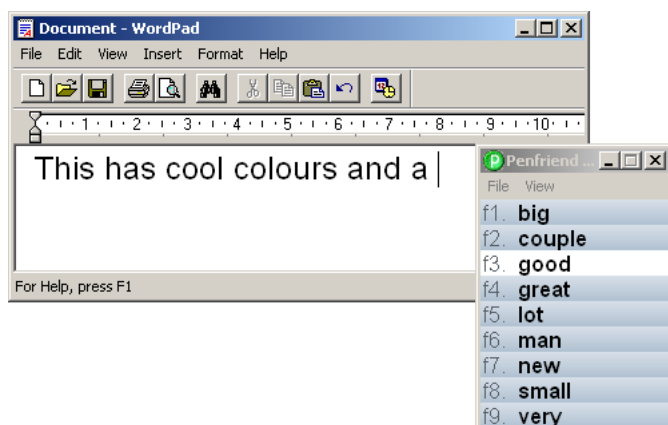
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Pen friend



What is Pen friend?

It is an add-on program to a Word Processing package that frees up students of any age from about 7 upwards to concentrate on the content of written work rather than the spelling, handwriting, and to the extent that they do not have to find and strike every letter, their keyboarding skills.

Who will benefit from using Pen friend?

Penfriend software benefits users who have dyslexia, visual impairment or physical disabilities, including Cerebral Palsy, Multiple Sclerosis, Motor Neurone Disease, Stroke, limb deformities and any condition which impairs the ability to write with a keyboard.

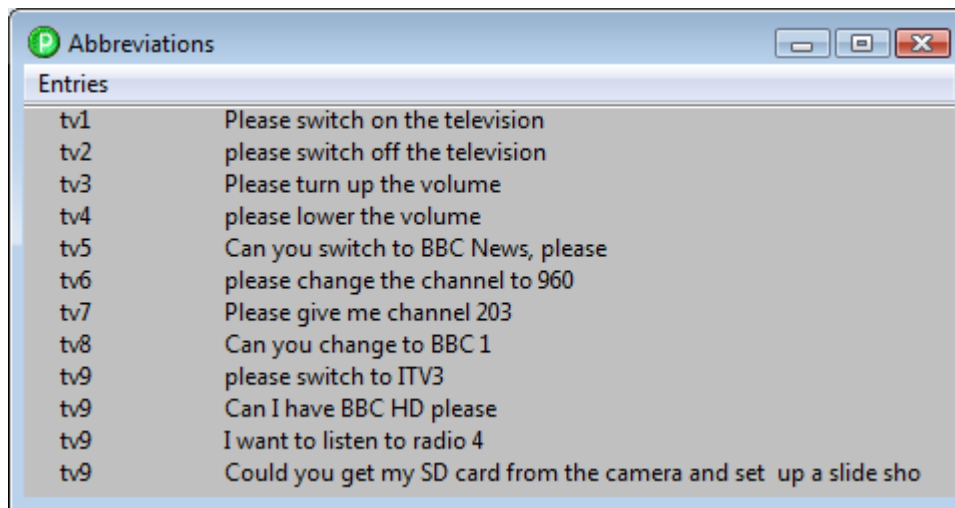
Features

- Word Prediction
- On screen keyboard
- Screen reader with speech feedback
- Abbreviation expansion
- Lexicon editing

Pen friend helps users to write faster by predicting the next word they want to type, it does this by using a dictionary of known words along with detailed knowledge of when they are likely to be used, their grammatical type, words you have used before and so on. Every time you type a letter it comes up with a new list of the most likely words which fit your letters. In order to choose the letter you press one more button or click on the word with a mouse. If you are not sure how to read a word you can hear it spoken out loud. Being able to hear the letter read

back to you or a piece of text read back to you allows particularly people with dyslexia understand the contents of a document they may not be able to read ,but also helps them associate the sound of a word with how it looks on the page. The onscreen keyboard can reduce the strain of glancing between screen and keyboard.

An abbreviated expansion system which reconstructs full words or sentences from abbreviated type text can be very important benefit for people who suffer from motor difficulties or dyslexia. Reliable abbreviation expansion reduces the number of keystrokes that users need to input in order to communicate in full or rich language. Penfriend can store or assign words to special codes. By typing one abbreviation for example tv up to 12 options can be shown these can then be entered into a document or spoken.



The other useful feature of Penfriend is its ability to edit lexicons. This means that penfriend can learn new words as you are using them and add to its dictionaries. It can also keep track of the ones you've used and your style of writing. This helps to predict the right words the next time.

Operating systems

Penfriend XL and XP work on windows XP, Vista and Windows 7. They also work with all versions of Microsoft Office including MS Office 10

Installation

It is a very easy process to install Penfriend with CD or Portable version. Once CD is inserted in drive a wizard will appear with instructions on how to install your software. Please see this link for installation process:

<http://www.penfriend.biz/support/gettingstarted.pdf>

Training

There are very easy step by step tutorials available which can be taken at users own pace. However this product is very intuitive and does not require much training to use the basic functions. However in order to gain maximum benefit from the software it is advisable to save Lexicons (new lists of vocabularies) that you use frequently. Tutorials are also available to show user how to do this.

Video tutorials can be found on topics such as :

- Getting started with penfriend
- Homophone support with penfriend
- Penfriends powerful screen reader
- Screen reading the clipboard and high contrast settings
- Making customized abbreviations with pen friend
- Create multiple expansions for a single abbreviation
- Use drag and drop lexicons in Pen friend
- Pen friends onscreen keyboard
- Using styles in Pen friend version 4
- Typing numbers and minimizing pen friends prediction window
- Pen friend online word processors and social networking
- Typing with a mouse.

User guide and tutorials can be found at : <http://www.penfriend.biz/pf-userguide.html>

more advanced video tutorials can be found:
<http://penfriendltd.wordpress.com/penfriend-tutorials/>

Summary

Penfriend is one example of software that can support people with dyslexia or physical difficulties that make writing difficult when using a computer. There are a range of options available, and finding the right solution for a person with a disability requires a thorough analysis of the person's needs and a careful matching of the appropriate software features to meet these needs.

For those interested in finding out more about solutions for writing difficulties that best meets their needs the Advice and Assessment team at the Mada Center will be happy to meet and discuss all available options.

For further information contact the MADA Qatar Assistive Technology Center, 7th Floor, Al Nasr Tower B, Al Corniche Road, West Bay, Doha, Qatar. P.O. Box 24230. Ph: +974 44594050

References

<http://www.dyslexia-parent.com/software.html>

<http://www.penfriend.biz>

