

Ability Newsletter

Remote control home control

Product and Service News

- 1 Remote control home control
- 2 Chicony Wireless keyboard
- 3 Headset Phone Options
- 3 New Expert Mouse
- 4 Desktop Author
- 5 Inspiration
- 6 From the workshop
- 7 Ability News

Option 1: EasyTouch 35

The EasyTouch35 is designed to control up to 8 devices (TV, VCR, CD, SAT, CBL, DVD, AUDIO and X10 Home Automation). To allow direct control of all these appliances, in a convenient way, the EasyTouch35 includes a Touchscreen. The Touchscreen can display only the functions you need during a certain sequence. It acts as a "Virtual Keypad" comprising a 15 position segmented "key" area. There are 9 Macro keys, 20 commands per Macro key. Backlighting is available. The EasyTouch requires 4 AAA batteries and comes with a reasonable manual and a universal remote code book.

One important consideration with such a device is whether or not it can be controlled with a mouth stick. We have tested this device with a range of implements and it works fine. The screen appears to be touch sensitive rather than heat sensitive. Which makes this device extremely useful for controlling a complete, compact environmental control system (including door, lights, TV, stereo) by finger or pointer.



It is available now from Ability. The cost is only \$149.

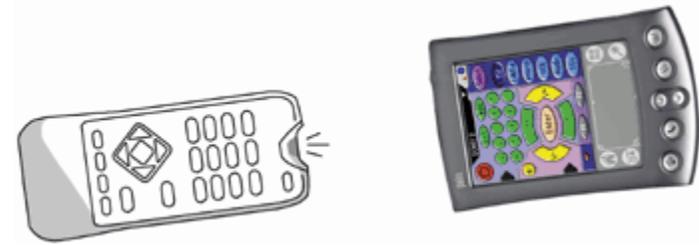


Option 2: Novii

Novii Remote is software that turns a Palm or Windows CE device into a powerful remote control. Infrared codes are drawn from a supplied database or else can be learnt direct from another remote control. A picture

appears on the display, with a button configuration that resembles a remote control device for that function (say TV remote). You can also customise the "hard" buttons on the device to have specified functions (such as "volume up").

Novii Remote is available on line at: www.novii.tv
The cost starts at US \$25.



Cheap wireless keyboard

This **Chicony Wireless** keyboard is light weight and incorporates a pointing device. Infra-red transmission, IBM PC AT, PS/2 and Microsoft Windows compatible, Full-size keys, Built-in mouse device and 2 mouse buttons, Wide operating angle, Embedded numeric keypad, Keyboard and mouse combo plugs for the infra-red receiver.

Available through Ability for \$79.



WORD

Special features and shortcuts

You can find a wealth of information about customising WORD and other Microsoft products at: www.microsoft.com/enable/training.

Headset Telephone Options

A client asked us if there was such a thing as a headset for a cordless phone as she was finding it frustrating having to rely on a carer to hold the phone steady while she was making calls. After some detective work we found a couple of headset options from Dick Smith Electronics.

These headsets can be used for any phone that has a 2.5mm socket. You can get the DSE Headset prepackaged with a Panasonic cordless phone.

More on Phones

We are currently in the process of reviewing and testing some wireless headset microphones that can be used with a phone and computer. We will let you know the results of our testing.



Plantronics Cordless Phone Headset



DSE Cordless Phone Headset

New Expert Mouse

There is much to like about the new **Expert Mouse trackball** from Kensington. Apart from the sleek black colour, there is a new friction-free roller mechanism, making ball control effortless. Also new is the standard but detachable wrist rest.

The cost of the new trackball is still to be determined. It will be available from Ability.



Desktop Author Presentation software

This Australian-designed software provides a refreshing change to Powerpoint for creating interesting presentations. It simulates a book, with realistic page turns giving a pleasing effect. Clicking on one side of the double-page spread opens the next page in that direction. A Contents page can give easy access to various headings in the "book".

This software would be useful for catalogues and on-line brochures. But it would also be useful to provide stimulating picture books for children with disabilities. Text and pictures can be incorporated, with very flexible design options. The cost is \$195. A free demo is available at: www.desktopauthor.com



RocketMouse

This innovative trackball gives the user great flexibility in placement of the device. One would need to be careful of over-use of the thumb however.

It sells for \$29.95 US for "a limited time", before reverting to \$59.95 US. We will be testing one soon and will report on our findings.

See it at www.rocketmouse.com.



Inspiration

"In Inspiration, you think and learn visually. Inspiration provides you with the tools that let you create a picture of your ideas or concepts in the form of a diagram. It also provides an integrated outlining environment for you to develop your ideas into organised written documents.

When you work with visual representations of ideas, you easily see how one idea relates to others. Learning and thinking become active rather than passive. You discover where your deepest knowledge lies and where the gaps in your understanding are. When you create a visual map of ideas, you can recall the details better than if you had read a paragraph."

As an inveterate paper planner, I can understand the power of the diagram. However I don't think I will give up my pen and paper just yet. Inspiration has many features, but unless you develop significant fluency in using these features, spontaneity is lost. I imagine fluency would come with practice.

The program has some good features however, such as moving from work outlines to picture outlines. I would see it as a great tool for a teacher to use to help a student organise their thoughts, so that they could then develop these thoughts further on their own.

Version 7 has audio capabilities. Students can hear work read aloud or record their own words, adding a new dimension to their projects. A talking interface increases accessibility for all learners.

Inspiration costs \$124 and is available through Ability. A demo is available.

From the Workshop

Slowing the cursor with an Expert Mouse

Someone recently posed a problem to us. Their wife uses a Kensington Trackball and it is becoming increasingly difficult for her as the cursor moves too quickly. They have adjusted the *MouseWorks* settings as much as they can but it is still too fast, so what more can they do?

After some investigation we found that the new *MouseWorks* driver (version 6.0.2) has an option to switch back to the standard Windows mouse properties. This allows you to further reduce the mouse speed. To get into this window:

- Open Kensington MouseWorks
- Click on the Kensington tab
- Click on 'Switch to Standard Panel'
- Click on the Pointer Options tabs
- Adjust the Motion speed



Ability Mobile Phone Guidelines

For those considering the Ability modification to enable a switch to be used to control a voice dial phone: you need to check some details with your phone retailer. Make sure that voice-activated dialling can be activated by holding down the button of the personal hands-free kit, and that this button also can be used to answer and terminate calls. Get the retailer to demonstrate these features to you, to be sure.

After you buy the phone, just send us the hands-free kit. We attached a 3.5mm in-line mono jack, so that any switch can be plugged in. The cost is \$80.

Ability News

Trips

Graeme has continued to journey far and wide. Forthcoming trips will include Tamworth/Narrabri, Newcastle, Canberra and possibly the South Coast and Melbourne. Whenever possible Graeme prefers to travel by train, to catch up on reading and to do some planning and thinking away from the daily bustle. We have also attended Expos with the Motor Neurone Disease Association and the Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association.

Some new ideas

Preparations are currently under way for making **videos** of equipment and procedures, including the development of training material. We are also revamping some of our **administrative procedures**, to keep the wheels turning smoothly. We plan to expand our **assessment resources** substantially. Our product database is also being upgraded and expanded. New **research proposals** are also being developed at the present time. Never a dull moment!

Ability funding

As most of you realise, Ability Technology is a not-for-profit charity. However we are not directly funded by the government for our work. This means that we have to generate our own income to cover the costs of the work we do. This income comes from our services (such as assessments, training, technical support), our sales (of computer products, especially specialised products for people with disabilities) and research projects. We also receive tax-deductible donations from individuals and corporations; this income is used to fund services and equipment for those who cannot afford to pay for these. We also spend a lot of time, on the phone or through email, offering advice and assistance to people; this is done without charge.

If you are interested in making a donation, be assured that all of the money you give will go to the dedicated purpose. Our overheads are already covered by our other work.

ABILITY TECHNOLOGY LIMITED

ABN 26 090 463 997

29 Frenchs Forest Rd Seaforth NSW 2092

Post: Private Box 44, 145 Sydney Rd Fairlight NSW 2094

Ph: (02) 9907-9736 Fax: (02) 9907-9599

Email: info@abilitytech.com.au Web: www.abilitytech.com.au

