



TABLEMIKE FACE-OFF

[SpeechWare 3-in-1](#), [6-in-1](#), [9-in-1](#) & [TravelMike Sennheiser MD 431 II](#), [Buddy Desktop DSP](#), [Olympus ME 31](#) & [Audix](#)

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Introduction:

While preparing to review the new SpeechWare 3-in-1, it occurred to me that the most effective way to do so would be in the context of the top rated speech microphones.

The following review consists of 3 parts:

- (1) My personal take on the [evolution of speech recognition microphones](#)
- (2) The [Pros and Cons](#) of what a general consensus of many top speech recognition experts believe to be the *top five desktop microphones* (TableMikes)
- (3) My personal [assessment](#) of what the numbers mean

If you wish to skip past the brief microphone history, click [Pros and Cons](#). If you wish to skip further ahead to my conclusions, click [recommendations](#).

Note that while only one of these microphones could achieve the 1st place overall rating, each is still an excellent choice for speech recognition.

Evolution of Speech Recognition Microphones

When we first began using DragonDictate speech recognition software in the 1980's it seemed to be incredibly impressive technology. Never minding the very deliberate pause after each and every word, we waited with baited breath to see another (hopefully correct) word miraculously appear on our somewhat blurry little screens. It was fun! It was frustrating! It was not very practical. Back then, the couple of wired headset microphone choices available to us were more than adequate.

In 1996, NaturallySpeaking continuous speech recognition was released. With the emergence of this new technology, we had a viable tool for professional as well as personal use. That being the case, we needed microphones designed to better utilize this increasingly more sophisticated software. Microphone manufacturers responded. They designed wireless systems. They designed combination headset microphones that could additionally be used with cell phones, landlines and even hydraulic lifters which picked up our handsets for us. While noise canceling and accuracy continued to improve, ultimately many of us still were not happy with our headset microphones, finding them to be rather inconvenient and/or uncomfortable. Physicians and other professionals were often forced to don and then remove their headsets every few minutes, between patients or clients. Other end users, needing to take verbal notes while talking on the phone, put their callers on hold, which was both inefficient and impolite. While handheld microphones such as the Philips [SpeechMike Air](#) now allow concurrent use of both a microphone and a telephone, they don't solve all problems for all end users. Some of us simply need to keep both hands free. Fortunately, microphone manufacturers have also been busily designing high quality desktop microphones.

A desktop microphone just might be your best option if:

- You find headset microphones to be uncomfortable
- You like to listen to music through high fidelity headphones while working
- You are physically disabled
- You are self-conscious about wearing a headset in front of others
- You don't need to be wireless
- You NEED to keep both hands free

- You dislike having to continuously don and remove your headset
- You take the time to arrange your hair just the way you like it and THAT IS HOW YOU WANT TO KEEP IT!

Pros & Cons

Speechware 3-in-1, 6-in-1, 9-in-1 & TravelMike

MSRP: \$279 -

Accuracy: 100%

Noise Cancellation: 9 out of 10

Overall Rating: 10 out of 10



Speechware 3-in-1, 6-in-1, 9-in-1 & TravelMike Pros:

- **100% Accuracy**
- Belgian engineering (think Mercedes)
- The most accurate desktop microphone we have tested
- NEW "De Clicking" algorithm (2nd-generation exclusive) ~ The "De Clicking" algorithm filters out keystroke taps, throat clearing etc. (clicking) from reaching NaturallySpeaking
- Recipient of Nuance's highest (5 Dragon "[Best of Class](#)") rating
- Only Microphone Featuring Auto Gain (auto volume control)
- Only Microphone Featuring Auto EQ
- Detachable microphone boom for easier storage and transport
- Unusually high noise cancellation for desktop microphone
- End-user Programmable On/Off/ momentary switch
- Includes an option to bypass the built-in gooseneck microphone with a headset microphone (for working in noisier environments) which allows you to use the base as a noise filtering USB soundcard.
- The only desktop microphone that can be preset to turn on when booting your computer. This can be especially important to the physically disabled.
- Includes headphone jack and volume controls
- The 1st microphone to include separate specialized settings for speech recognition mode and VoIP/Skype mode
- Speech recognition mode includes a specialized Adaptive Noise Canceling algorithm

- 1st desktop microphone to include Automatic Gain Control
- Only desktop microphone to feature 2 dedicated volume controls for sound playback
- Only desktop microphone to feature a dedicated mic sensitivity control to reject unwanted background noise
- Built-in exclusive audio filtering USB soundcard
- **Extremely accurate up to 18 inches** (that's no typo) but can be utilized at even further distances thanks to the built-in Automatic Gain Control feature
- The 6-in-1 adds a foot pedal option to toggle the microphone on and off, playback speaker and an extra USB port.
- The 9-in-1 additionally adds a 2nd USB port, telescoping (adjustable) gooseneck and an SD card reader to the 6-in-1 add-ons
- The TravelMike model is a significantly smaller lighter mobile version of the 3-in-1 designed for tablet and notebook computer use
- **2 year manufacturer warranty**

SpeechWare 3-in-1 Cons:

- Slightly more expensive than competitive units

Buddy Desktop DSP

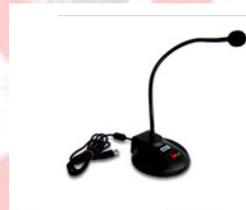
MSRP: \$170

Accuracy: 98%

Noise Cancellation: 7 out of 10

Overall Rating: 8 out of 10

Note that we did not include other types of Buddy microphones, such as the Buddy Gooseneck and Buddy Flamingo, in our testing because they incorporate the same microphone element (without a base).



Buddy Desktop DSP Pros:

- 98% Accuracy with new integrated 7G USB soundcard
- Built-in noise filtering USB soundcard
- Includes microphone mute button
- Accurate up to 8 inches away
- Excellent price value
- 1 year manufacturer warranty

Buddy Desktop & Buddy Desktop DSP Cons:

- Currently requires sending the unit to Canada for service and warranty repairs
- Limited (2 to 5 inch) microphone range (9 to 11 inches with the Buddy Desktop DSP)

Audix USB 12

MSRP: \$179

Accuracy: 97%

Noise Cancellation: 6 out of 10

Overall Rating: 6 out of 10



Audix USB 12 Pros:

- Lowest priced USB desktop microphone
- Headphone jack for optional sound out
- Similar accuracy to the higher-priced discontinued 6G
- Button can be programmed to work as an on-off switch or push to talk
- Smallest footprint of any desktop microphone, requiring the least amount of table space
- 1 year manufacturer warranty



Audix USB 12 Cons:

- Not quite as accurate as the new Buddy 7G which has replaced the 6G
- We experienced some unwanted pops and plosives when dictating within the limited 2 inch range. We were able to remedy this by speaking off to the side of the microphone.

- This microphone had a limited 2 inch range, but was actually slightly more accurate from within 1 inch. This concerned us.
- We found the 12 inch boom to be a little shorter than we would like in some situations.
- We do not like membrane buttons at all. We prefer a true hardware button with more of a click feel like the other desktop microphones.

Olympus ME31

MSRP: \$200

Accuracy: 97%

Noise Cancellation: 7 out of 10

Overall Rating: 8 out of 10



Olympus ME31 Pros:

- Perfect for digital recorders when recording seminars
- **Accurate to within 3 feet** and can be used from as far away as 4
- Gun style long-distance directional pickup pattern
- Very small footprint; similar to the Audix
- 1 year manufacturer warranty

Olympus ME31 Cons:

- No built-in USB soundcard
- Slightly high priced for a microphone with no built-in USB soundcard
- No actual noise cancellation but because this microphone is highly directional, it marginally rejects sound from the sides and back
- This microphone should only be used in a quiet environment and may occasionally pick up keyboard key clicks

Sennheiser MD 431 II

MSRP: \$675

Accuracy: 100%

Noise Cancellation: 10 out of 10

Overall Rating: 10 out of 10



Note: The Sennheiser MD 431 II is not really a desktop microphone but we included it in this comparison because of its popularity and the fact that is commonly used as a desktop speech recognition microphone.

Sennheiser MD 431 II Pros:

- **100% Accuracy**
- **Stunning noise cancellation** (Super cardioid microphone element works great for rejecting unwanted sound)
- Includes on/off slider switch
- 1 year manufacturer warranty

Sennheiser MD 431 II Cons:

- Roughly triple the price of the competition
- Limited 2 to 3 inch range
- This microphone's unwieldy length makes it difficult to utilize as a desktop microphone because it was primarily designed for vocalists/musicians

Conclusions:

1st Place ~ SpeechWare 3-in-1, 6-in-1, 9-in-1 & TravelMike

[\(Click to See\)](#)

The SpeechWare TableMikes simply blew our socks off (along with the competition) with devastating accuracy from within 21 inches, and was quite usable from as far away as 40 inches! The SpeechWare TableMikes introduced several new technologies built into the world's only speech recognition microphone that contains a circuit board with amenities like de-clicking algorithm (specialized filters that prevent NaturallySpeaking from hearing you clear your throat, keystrokes, lip smacks and coffee cup clinks) along with specialized NaturallySpeaking 11/12 algorithms for higher accuracy. This microphone additionally includes a bypass setting so that you can use it for podcasts, VoIP applications or earlier versions of NaturallySpeaking/DragonDictate.

We also fell in love with the additional perks which include the option to add

an external headset microphone, headphones, volume controls and a noise filtering USB soundcard. The MD 431 II was unbeatable from 2 to 3 inches but if you spend a significant amount of time dictating, it is all but impossible to comfortably maintain a 2 inch distance from your microphone over any given period of time. Most of us are working with larger monitors, taking phone calls, sorting or referring to papers, and dealing with interruptions and distractions of various sorts. We like to lean back in our chairs. We turn. We fidget. We stretch. Because of the extended range of the SpeechWare TableMikes, we have found nothing to match its accuracy when dictating beyond 3 inches. Note that the TravelMike is a smaller more compact version of the 3-in-1 that is designed for notebook and tablet computers. It also has a shorter 15 inch range. Additional manufacturer information available at www.TableMike.com

This review was dictated with the SpeechWare 9-in-1 microphone and by the time I finished testing, I made the SpeechWare 9-in-1 my personal microphone of choice. I informed the fine folks at SpeechWare that the only way they would get back their 9-in-1 prototype was if they "pried it from my cold dead fingers" to quote someone, none of us will ever forget... They wisely elected to let me keep it ☺

2nd Place ~ Sennheiser MD 431 II ([Click to See](#))

This microphone is the measuring stick used against all other microphones. From within 2 inches, no microphone we have ever tested is more accurate or more noise canceling. The Sennheiser was significantly more noise canceling than any other desktop microphone. However, negative aspects include a sticker shock price tag of \$500 (MAP pricing), unwieldy length for positioning as a desktop microphone and the limited 2 inch range (requiring users to lock their bodies into one position over long periods of time). You can optionally purchase a swing-arm for this microphone, allowing you to change positions, but that increases the price even more. Although this is the most noise canceling and accurate desktop microphone we've ever tested, the 3 negative aspects dropped it down to 4th place. Additional manufacturer information available at www.sennheiserusa.com

3rd Place ~ Buddy Desktop 7G DSP ([Click to See](#))

What can we say other than this is the classic desktop microphone that all other manufacturers mimic, and it has recently been improved with the 7G USB soundcard and the introduction of a new process called FilteredAudio

(exclusive to the DSP model) . We felt this was a great microphone and continue to carry it on our website because of the price (only slightly higher than the Audix USB 12) and quality. Additional manufacturer information available at www.insyncspeech.com

4th Place ~ Olympus ME31 *([Click to See](#))*

This is a great microphone with good accuracy for long distance dictation of up to 4 feet and quite accurate within 3 feet. If you need long-distance, this is your best choice but the noise canceling aspects and price lower this microphone to 5th place. Additional manufacturer information available at www.olympusamerica.com

5th Place ~ Audix USB 12 *([Nothing to See](#))*

Although this is a reasonable speech recognition microphone, it is only included in the "top 6" because of the lower price. We personally didn't feel the slightly lower price justified offering it on our website, considering how much better the other units scored. Additional manufacturer information available at www.audixusa.com



Previous Reviews:

If you would like to see some of our previous reviews check out the following:

[KnowBrainer TableMike Face-Off](#)
[KnowBrainer Handheld Microphone Face-Off](#)
[KnowBrainer Headset Microphone Face-Off](#)
[KnowBrainer Telephone Microphone Face-Off](#)
[KnowBrainer Digital Recorder Face-Off](#)
[KnowBrainer Wireless Headset Face-Off](#)
[KnowBrainer USB Soundcard Face-Off](#)

Current Gold Standards:

The following is a list of microphones, USB soundcards and digital recorders that we consider to be #1 in their respected categories:

Best Wireless Microphone = [Samson Airline 77](#)
Best Combo Telephone Wireless Microphone = [Sennheiser SD Pro1](#)
Best Handheld USB Microphone = Philips [SpeechMike Premium \(LFH-3500\)](#)
Best USB TableMike = [SpeechWare 3-in-1](#), [6-in-1](#) & [9-in-1](#)
Best Wired Headset Microphone = [FlexyMike DEC](#)
Best USB soundcard = [SpeechWare MultiAdapter](#)
Best Bluetooth Microphone = [VXi VoxStar UC](#)
Best Digital Recorder = Philips [DPM-8000](#)
Best Speech Recognition Application = [Dragon 13](#)

[Lunis Orcutt](#) - Developer of [KnowBrainer 2015](#) and founder of [KnowBrainer Speech Recognition Forums](#) (the world's largest speech recognition forum)
[Chat Live](#) w/ a Nuance Gold Certified Speech Recognition Solutions Provider

