

The Monthly Newsletter for the Website Tech4Attorneys.com

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Welcome to the first monthly newsletter of Tech4Attorneys. This publication and its associated website are dedicated to the proposition that most attorneys in solo practice or in small firms do not have the time or the energy to fight on the front lines of technological advancement. It's hard enough managing your clients and continuing education without spending hours researching software interoperability and hardware compatibility, or on the phone with someone in tech support, whose speech is peppered with words you do not understand, and instructions you cannot follow.

Each month we will review the newest hardware and software and how you can best integrate it into your law practice. In addition, we will advise our subscribers on compatibility issues, and work-arounds for common compatibility problems. In addition, you may follow us on Twitter (<http://twitter.com/tech4attorneys>), and email us at comments@tech4attorneys.com to make suggestions with regard to future newsletter articles and reviews, as well as email us at support@tech4attorneys.com for assistance with support for the various products we recommend. (If we recommend a product it will be because we use and are completely familiar with the product).

The subscription fee is \$6.00 a month or \$60.00 for a year for individuals, with discounted rates for small firms of less than 10 practicing attorneys. Your subscription gives you access to our subscriber forum for support information as well as downloadable files and templates to improve your efficiency as an attorney.

Please note that, at this time, we do not intend to accept advertising from any of the companies whose hardware or software we review or recommend to eliminate any bias that might otherwise result in the review of any product.

The Livescribe Pulse Pen — a Small Miracle

The [Livescribe Pulse Pen](#) is one of the best new products to come out since some very wise man decided to slice the bread before selling it. It is a pen which records not only hand-written text and drawings, but also audio which may be associated with the text.



The Technology

The secret is in a small camera in the tip of the pen that tracks microdots embedded or printed on the paper. Each dot tells the pen exactly where it is on the page, and in which notebook that page is located. The notebooks are of two types, either a spiral bound, three-hole-punched, lined notebook with 200 pages (100 sheets), or a hardbound journal, lined or unlined, also containing 200 pages. Prices for replacement notebooks and journals track the prices for such items at most office supply stores. In addition, with a PostScript printer or a good quality laser printer and a high-quality resolution PDF file (available in our downloads section), it is possible to print 25-page notebooks (lined or unlined) on your own printer.

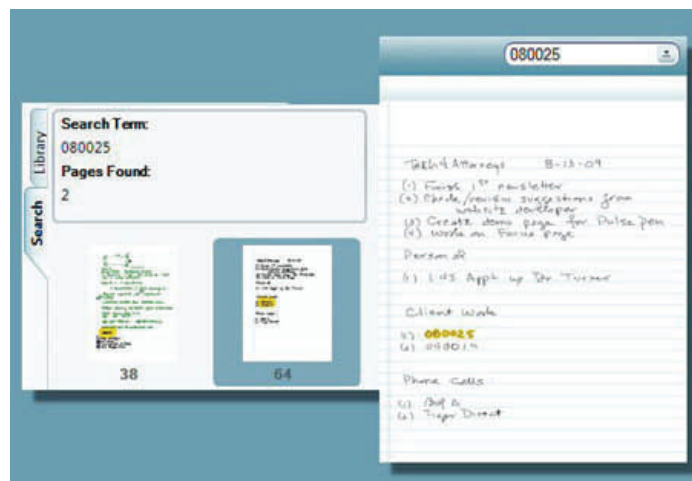
The most amazing part of the Pulse Pen is its ability to keep all your handwritten notes, and their associated audio, in sync with your computer. Simply dock the pen in the charging and syncing cradle and it not only charges the pen, but syncs all of your notes and audio with the applicable notebooks. Yes, “notebooks” plural, because the pen can juggle up to eighteen different notebooks at the same time (that is 2 lined journals, 2 unlined journals, 2 three-subject notebooks, 8 single-subject notebooks, and 4 printable notepads). The printable notepads are particularly useful for taking notes (and recording audio) at continuing education seminars when you would rather not carry a larger notebook with you.

Sharing, Syncing & Searching

What takes slightly more effort is sharing limited notes (called “sessions by Livescribe) with your colleagues or clients. If you are only concerned with sharing notes, it is simply a matter of printing them. However, if you are interested in sharing notes and audio, at present the only way to do this is to upload the session

(notes and associated audio) to the account created for you on the Livescribe servers when you register your pen. A “pencast” session can be made either public or private. If the pencast is private, then access is limited to those the user sends the link to the Livescribe URL where the notes and audio are stored. It is also possible to sync your Pulse Pen to more than one computer (although this is not noted on the site or in the user manual). Therefore, an attorney could keep a set of notebooks (with audio) on his or her computer, and maintain copies on an associate’s computer, or a secretarial computer (or all three).

Does the ability to keep several notebooks current mean that it is difficult to manage or find the notes you need? No, because, wonder of wonders, once transferred to the computer, the **text becomes searchable**. If your handwriting makes a chicken’s scratching look eminently readable, then simply place a printed



key word somewhere in your notes (such as the client’s name or client number, for example), and you can search your notebooks for that keyword whenever you need to locate those notes. It is a simple matter to print out the notes you need for placement in the client’s file, however, for those times when the file has become too thick to search quickly, or the entire file has managed to go awol, there is nothing that beats a quick computer search to find the note you need. In addition, the software makes it possible to embed bookmarks at various spots in your notes, and then simply move from bookmark to bookmark. There is also limited handwriting to text conversion available from [VisionObjects](#) for \$29.95.

Audio Recording & Sound Quality

The audio recording is very clear, especially when the headphone/microphones that come with the pen are used. Anything the average person can hear, even in a large lecture hall, the microphones will pick up in high quality directional stereo. There is also a non-stereo microphone in the pen itself, which works fairly well in a pinch, but does not provide the same surround-sound experience.

Battery Life & Recharging

The Pulse Pen was given an acid test recently at the California Solo and Small Firm Summit in Berkeley, California. The user was able to record audio and take notes for 13 hours before the battery finally ran out of juice. The pen recharges in its cradle in a matter of a few hours, so if left to charge overnight, or placed in the cradle in between sessions during the workday, the charge should be sufficient for even a particularly long day.

Pen Controls

The recording and playback controls are simple and straightforward, and are present on every page of each notebook (in addition to the pages of the print-your-own notebooks), so there is no need to search for them. Simply open the notebook, start taking notes, and when you wish to record audio, tap the “record” button at the bottom of the page.



When uploaded to the computer, notes with audio associated are displayed in green, and notes with no audio associated are black. Another great feature, called “paper play” allows the user to simply touch the pen to any portion of the handwritten notes on the paper in order to hear the audio which was being recorded at the time. For example, if you were writing a citation but failed to get it all down before the speaker moved on, you would tap the pen on the portion of the citation you did manage to write in order to hear the speaker say it again.

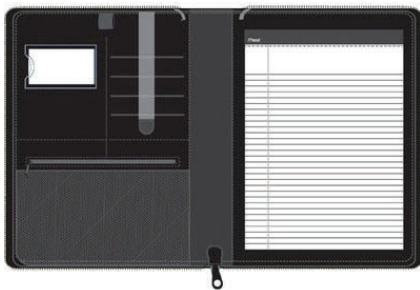
An on-off button is located next to the view screen on the pen, and various features may be accessed through additional page-based controls and shortcuts.

Additional Features

The pen itself is a nice size, neither too fat or too thin to hold comfortably. There is a built in clock/calculator in the top portion of the pen, both of which can work either with the controls set inside each notebook, or with handwritten controls. Additional programs (language translation among them) are available for demonstration purposes, but are not on the market as of this writing.

Creating a Professional Image

Now for the downside, it's not steep, but it is there all the same. Livescribe makes and sells the pen and the notebooks, however, they do not make an executive cover specifically for the Pulse Pen and its notebooks. (Leather pen covers are available, but have limited usefulness). Since it pays to create a professional image with your clients and in court, you need to be a little creative. What is necessary is a good-looking side entry folio cover for 8.5 x 11 spiral bound notebooks. These are available from third party manufacturers at prices ranging from reasonable to extremely expensive.



One good choice is the [At-A-Glance "Business Jacket" folio cover](#), which holds both the Livescribe notebook and Pulse Pen, but also has a zippered pocket for the headphones/microphones, as well as room for a regular notepad, business cards and other office tools. It is difficult to see from the photo, but there are side entry slots in both sides of the spine.

[DayTimer](#) also makes some very nice (but decidedly more expensive) side-entry pad folio covers that will work with the Pulse Pen and Livescribe notebooks. So, for the attorney who needs to make a serious executive impression, the appropriate covers are out there, just not from Livescribe.



Another option (to use alone or in conjunction with a folio cover) is to create your own side bound notebook using Circa products available from [Levenger.com](#). These

notebooks have the advantage of being easy to customize, allowing you to keep only as many pages on hand as you might reasonably use in the course of a day (or an extended conference).

Printing Your Own Paper

As noted above it is possible to bypass using the Livescribe notebooks in favor of printing your own (at 25 pages per notebook). While this is a nice option, especially if you use a Circa notebook to organize your day, it is not necessarily the most cost effective. Four notebooks of 100 sheets (that's 200 pages of writing surface) are available for \$15.39 (as of the date of this article) from Amazon.com. Further, if you buy at least \$50 worth of items eligible for Super Savings shipment, the shipment is free. That is roughly \$0.02 a page, including the cost of paper. Even the least expensive inkjet printers aren't that cost effective.

In addition, keep in mind that most law offices are not going to want to spend from \$4,500 - \$15,000 for a true PostScript printer. Those high-end printers are intended for use in businesses that do large scale, high quality document production. The print-your-own notepads are available for download from Livescribe, however, without the PostScript driver and printer, printing paper that actually works reliably with the Pulse Pen can be a hit or miss proposition. The very clever and helpful user community at the Livescribe forums have made the PostScript printing files available for download. We, in turn, have converted those PostScript files into PDF documents, which may be printed on any printer. These PDF files are available to our regular subscribers for download at our downloads area. In order to use the notebook pads, you will need to have a printer that provides at least 600x600 resolution, preferably a color laser printer, although black and white laser prints have been tested and appear to work quite well. Note, that if you have trouble getting the PDF files to print on your printer, please contact us rather than Livescribe. They do not support any printing of their PulsePen compatible paper except using a true PostScript printer.

When & When Not to Use the Pulse Pen

The PulsePen is incredibly handy for educational seminars (no worries about missing some citation mentioned in passing and not in the written materials), as well as in client conferences, both in person and by telephone. Of course, you should always inform the client before you tape, but if the client understands that

you can refer back to the actual conversation rather than bothering them regarding information discussed but not reduced to writing, most will likely consent to the audio recording. Naturally, you should **not** use the PulsePen for audio recording in open court, at depositions, or anywhere a court reporter has been employed to provide a transcript of the proceedings.

Price & Availability

The 1 GB Pulse Pen retails for \$150, and the 2 GB pen for \$200. It is more than worth the additional \$50 to have double the memory. 2 GB will hold approximately 200 pages of written notes and 200 hours of audio. The Livescribe Pulse Pen, notebooks and other accessories are available directly from [Livescribe](#) (not our recommended vendor only because their shipping costs are quite high) , as well as from [Amazon.com](#), and [Target](#). Since there is no appreciable difference in the price among vendors, if you are able to do so, take advantage of free shipping from Amazon.

Questions? Contact Us

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