COMPUTE WITHOUT A MOUSE

There are heaps of great programs out there that help you reduce your reliance on your mouse and clicking, but what if you could get rid of your mouse altogether?

Dragon NaturallySpeaking

Dragon is mostly used to work with certain programs like Microsoft Office where it is easy and efficient to use (see our helping hand sheet on 'Voice Operated Computing' for more information). It also comes with three flavours of voice-operated mousing, and while none are perfect, they can at least help provide temporary relief from using your mouse.

The first way is to the mouse a specific distance, i.e. "Mouse Up 1" with any number from 1 to 10. This only moves the mouse a few centimeters on the screen though so it is mostly useful for adjusting your mouse position after using one of the other methods.

Second is to say "Move Mouse Down" and then "Faster or Slower" to change how quickly it's moving, then say "Stop" when it's in the right spot and "Click". This is quite frustrating to do though and very slow. Google 'Dragon mouse commands' for more commands.

The most effective mode is Dragon's 'Mouse Grid'. In this mode, dragon splits the screen into nine sections as seen in the picture. You then choose a number and it will sub-divide that section into another nine sections again and again until the mouse is in the spot you want. You can then say "Click". To find out how to drag, scroll, etc. watch the video 'Control Mouse by Voice | Speech Recognition | Move & Click' on YouTube.

You can extend the functionality of the Dragon Mouse Grid by installing Caster. This generally makes the Dragon Mouse Grid faster and easier to use. You can find out more about it by watching 'Alternate Mouse Movement Modes' on YouTube.

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Vimium

You can also avoid a lot of mousing by browsing the web using only your keyboard. Vimium is an addon for Google Chrome that allows you to browse the web without touching your mouse. It's modelled on the popular text editor Vim and it essentially turns your keyboard into a large set of shortcuts that allow you to browse the web without having to reach for your mouse.

One of the main advantages of Vimium is that by giving up your mouse, you aren't just saving yourself from pain, but you'll actually be able to browse the web much faster and more easily—once you get the hang of it.

How does it work? While browsing the web normally, you can do whatever you need by using shortcuts on your key board. For example, move up (u), move down (d), go back (Shift – H), open a new tab (t), close a tab (x), reopen a tab you just closed (Shift–X).

Don't get discouraged by how confusing this looks, it just takes a little while to get used to. It's easy to forget exactly which key does what and sometimes you'll reach for the mouse out of habit. It's probably best to practice using Vimium at home before you try to use it in a professional environment because you'll need some time to learn all of its tricks. Once you do though, you'll be flying through web pages quickly and easily.

But how do you click on links? How do you type in text boxes if all your keys are shortcuts? This is all explained in the comprehensive and easy-to-understand video at http://vimium.github.io/

If you use Safari, there is an extension called vimari but it is not as well designed as its Chrome equivalents.