

Smartpen user

Jenny Narborough - E-learning Officer

Why did I decided to use the Smartpen?

The E-learning team has a Smartpen available for staff members to borrow. It looks like a really useful pen and to be able to advise others I felt I needed to have experienced using the pen personally.

In what scenarios have I used the Smartpen?

On occasions I am required to take meeting minutes. Minute taking is not something I do on a regular basis and I thought this would be a good opportunity to trial the Smartpen. As the Smartpen is also a writing pen, if all else failed, I would still have the written notes I would have had anyway.

Pen use - recording

Once in the meeting I simply switched the pen on and started the recording. I used the pen as a normal pen and wrote on the notepaper included. The digital display showed the pen was recording which was reassuring.

Prior to the meeting I had set the pen sound recording to conference mode as the group has about 20 members and the meetings are held in a medium sized meeting room. This mode proved ideal, however, the pen cannot work miracles, and those that speak quietly can still be hard to hear (but that was also the case in the meeting).

The meeting lasted about 2 hours and the pen memory had loads of space, and loads of battery left.

Pen use - replaying

Replaying the information was straight forward. Simply plug the headphones into the pen, switch it on, and press the nib on the section of the notes to hear the audio. There are also controls printed on the bottom of the paper to stop and start the audio.

I've got to admit I was very impressed and the recordings really helped when writing up the notes (although I had to remind myself I did not need to include every word which was spoken).

I used the software to save the recordings for my reference if I need at a later date, but all other functions were through the pen directly.

The negative points

The pen was quite chunky and heavy which isn't comfortable by the end of a long meeting. The software is not as intuitive as I had hoped and preferred using the pen controls instead of the software. Be aware actions closest to the microphone are picked up the clearest.

Would you use it again?

Yes definitely. I am hoping to use a Smartpen at future meetings where I take minutes.

Who would you recommend this pen to?

Anyone who has to take detailed notes in meetings or lectures and would find it helpful to be able to replay the audio.

Any final notes?

If you are using this pen regularly and or the notes you take are not for others to view, I would suggest you have your own pen and notepad. It's set up as a personal device rather than one to share, as the process of removing the information is not the most intuitive.