TEXT-TO-SPEECH ON ANDROID PORTABLES

Zero-cost text-to-speech apps, in combination with a zero-cost digital voice package from Google or Samsung, read text you provide and deliver excellent quality spoken English on your Android smartphone or tablet. One valuable use is to create spoken tones files that can become ringtones to announce callers, text tones to announce text senders, and ringtones to announce the time and purpose of Clock alarms.

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Introduction

Text-to-speech, the ability to speak text aloud using a digital voice, has a long history in personal computers. Windows Narrator first appeared on Windows computers in the year 2000. Text-to-speech can be used to assist the sight-impaired, the voice-impaired, and to read books to the dyslexic.

I use modern text-to-speech to create descriptive ringtones, text tones and Clock alarm tones for smartphones and tablets. Windows Narrator and the text-to-speech for Android smart phones produce excellent spoken English.

With an Android text-to-speech and an audio converter app, you can create and install custom spoken descriptive tones using only your Android portable, with no computer use required.

Read on to learn how to obtain and use the Android text-to-speech app I tested. This app is not the only one available at zero cost for text-to-speech, but it does the work very well.

The Android text-to-speech app

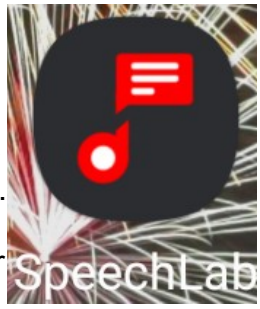

Illustration 1

I chose to use an app named **SpeechLab,** published by HitroLab. The installed version I tested is 1.2.0. You can see its icon in **illustration 1**.

This app can make use of either the Samsung digital voice package or the Google digital voice package. Both are zero-cost. I had installed both packages while testing another text-to-speech app, before I installed this SpeechLab app. In SpeechLab, I chose to use the Google package. Both packages provides voices for some English dialects and for many foreign languages.

You can see the SpeechLab app main screen in **illustration 2**. The large space in which my name appears is the **text entry area.** The number 10 at the bottom of the area is the number of characters typed in the area. You can enter more than 2,000 characters if you wish, by typing or by pasting. The microphone icon also lets you dictate text, but I have not tested that.

Several voice adjustment settings appear below the text entry area. I call that lower area the **Options Pane**. In the illustration, you see the Speech Engine field, the Language field, and the Voice field. The choices for Engine are Google (shown) and, at least on Samsung devices, Samsung. Tap the field to see the choices. Language options depend on the Speech Engine selection; both Engines have many English options. In the Google Engine, there are other English Language options: English UK, English Australia, English India, and English Nigeria. In the Google Engine, I counted a total of 81 language options, involving less than 81 countries because some countries have many different languages in use.

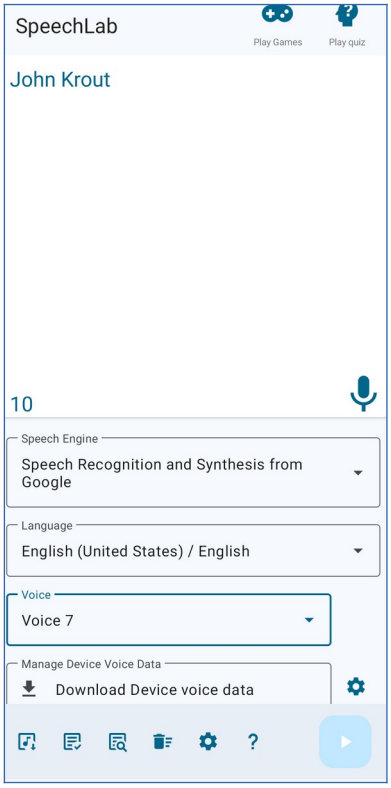

Illustration 2

Within each Language option, there can be zero or more installed voices, and others marked with an asterisk that are available to be used while connected to the Internet. To see the list and choose a voice, tap the Voice field. I have not tried any of the Internet -base voices. The digital voice names are labeled using numbers, rather than names of persons, and do not identify voice gender. There are eight installed US English voices; I tried all of them. Half sound female and half sound male.

There are more options below Voice. Scroll the Options Pane down to see the slider options shown in **illustration 3**. Each of the two sliders can be moved left or right by tap & drag. Each slider position is indicated by a number to the right of the slider.

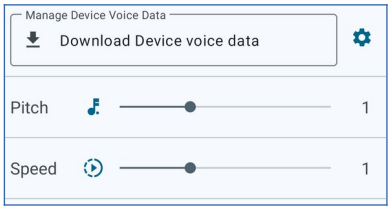

Illustration 3

The **Pitch slider** raises the voice pitch when moved to the right, and lowers voice pitch when moved to the left. The **Speed slider** speeds up the voice when moved to the right, and slows down the voice when moved to the left. For myself, in my early 70s, I use a speed of 0.7 because I think it improves understandability in noisy environments. Try out both sliders and decide what you like.

After a voice is chosen, and whenever either of the Pitch and Speed sliders are adjusted, type your name or some other short text in the text entry area. Tap the white triangular **Play button** in front of a blue background, located in the lower right corner, to audition the voice speaking your text.

Save the words spoken in an audio file

Other useful buttons are visible at screen bottom when the Options Pane is scrolled up. The most important is the leftmost button which

Illustration 4

records the spoken wordz into an audio file. The button is circled in **illustration 4.** Tap that button to save the spoken words in a WAV file.

Keep in mind that any file creation involves choosing at least the folder in which to store the file, and a name to give to the file.

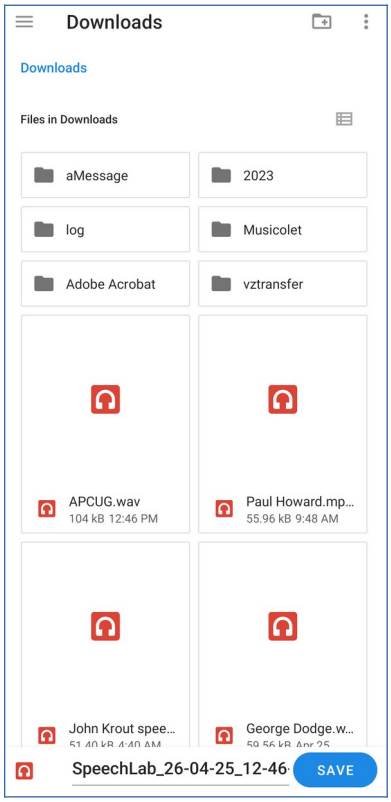

Illustration 5

When that button is tapped, a screen like the one shown in **illustration 5** appears. The screen defaults to the **Internal Storage/Downloads folder** of your Android device, and assigns a default name to the file, which appears at screen bottom.

The default audio file name is SpeechLab plus the date and time at which the Save button was tapped, plus the WAV extension. For tone creation, in the file name field, I change the name to be the words spoken aloud inside the file, plus the WAV extension.

Tap the **Save button** at the screen bottom to save the spoken words into a WAV file. A popup will ask you to confirm that you want to save the audio data. In that popup, tap **Save**.

Each time I tapped Save on my Android phone, an ad appeared. At the same time, the SpeechLab app began playing the audio file repeatedly. The ads sometimes include music or a speaking voice. The combination of the audio file voice and the ad sound was jarring. Look for a small speaker icon in the ad and tap that icon to turn the sound off. Tap the X button to close the ad when one appears. The main screen of the app reappears. Then tap the Back button to cease playing the audio file repeatedly.

You can eliminate the date and time from the default file name by tapping the Gear con at the bottom of the main screen, which is visible in illustration 4. In that screen, find the switch labeled **Add time in output name**. That switch is on by default. That the switch to turn it off.

The SpeechLab app is available for older Android phones. It runs on my Galaxy S10 running Android 12 and my Galaxy S7 running Android 8. I picked the Google engine, then picked English US, and then picked Voice 1. Voice 1 sounded fine on both.

It is possible to remove ads and add functionality for this app by tapping the **gear icon** at the bottom center of the main screen, shown in illustration 4**.** When I did that in April 2025, the cost of a single-payment permanent license to remove ads was $3.99 + tax.

How to obtain the SpeechLab app

This app has a short name and a unique name in the Play Store. You can use the Play Store search option to find it.

However, a bit of confusion is possible: the app name on the Play Store is **Voice Lab - Text To Speech TTS**. That is indeed the same app, as you can confirm by comparing the app icon shown in the Play Store to the icon shown in illustration 1.

If you want to install the app immediately, then use your Android device to scan the QR code shown in **illustration 6**. Your Camera app will display an option to open the Play Store; tap that option. Then the Play store opens and shows the page for installing SpeechLab.

Illustration 6

When you first run the SpeechLab app, if you do not already have a voice package installed, then the app will prompt you to load either the Samsung voice package or the Google voice package.

An Audio Converter app

This zero-cost app is named **Audio Converter** and is published by The AppGuru. I installed and used version 29.6. You can see the icon for the app in **illustration 7**.

Illustration 7

The main screen of the Audio Converter app is depicted in **illustration 8**. The basic usage process for the app is outlined by the numbered buttons in the screen. As you can see, the basic idea is to navigate to a folder containing the source audio file and select the source audio file, and then choose the conversion and the path and file name in which to store the converted audio file.

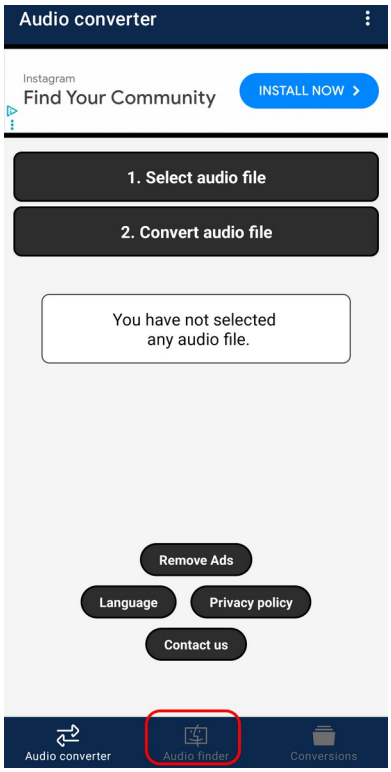

Illustration 8

I found the easiest approach for selecting an audio file recently created by SpeechLab was to tap a button at the center of the screen bottom. That button is labeled **Audio Finder** and is active despite its grayed appearance. That tap reveals the screen shown in **illustration 9**.

In that screen, first tap the **Selected Audio Format down-arrow** which is circled in the illustration. That tap reveals a popup containing a long list of audio file types, in alphabetic order. In that popup list, scroll to and tap WAV. That tap closes the popup list and puts the selection WAV under the words Selected Audio Format.

Next, examine the list of audio files that appears in the screen. It should list WAV audio files in chronological order. If your desired source file was the one created most recently, which is usually the case when you are working with SpeechLab, then your desired source file will appear at the top of the list.

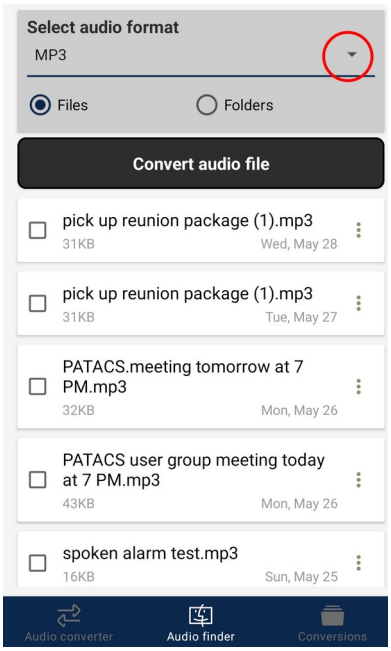

Illustration 9

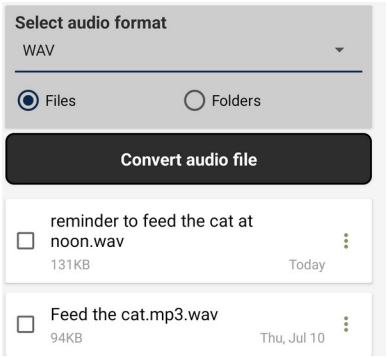

Illustration 10

Just before I started this Audio Converter app, I created a SpeechLab WAV file named **Reminder to feed the cat at noon**. You can see that audio file at the top of the WAV audio file list in **illustration 10**.

Tap the check mark box to the left of the source audio file, and then tap the Convert Audio File button above the list. The app may ask you to grant permission to display progress in your notifications bar. Tap the Grant button.

Another long popup appears. On my Samsung Galaxy S20 FE smartphone, the popup is actually longer than the phone screen. I made two screen image captures of the parts of the popup. A composite image of the popup appears in **illustration 11.**

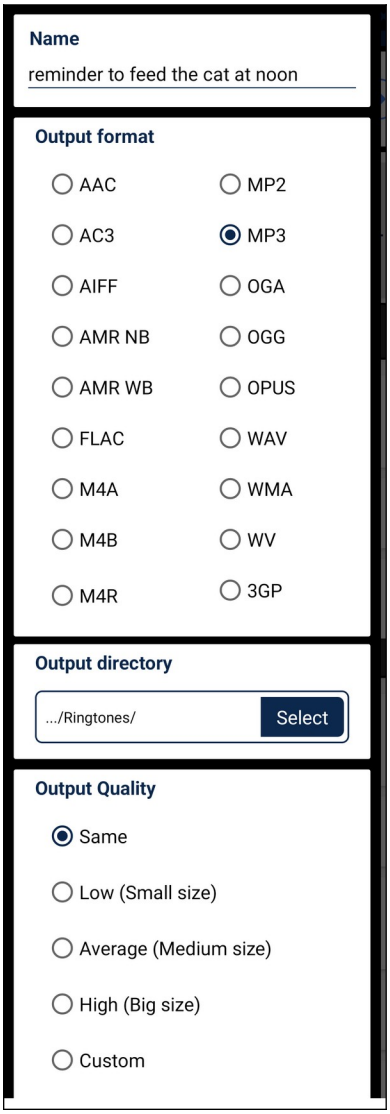

Illustration 11

From top to bottom, the popup shows the source file name, a radio button list of converted audio file type options, an Output folder (directory) in which to place the converted audio file, and a radio button list of Output audio quality options.

In file type options, if you are making an Android tone, then select MP3 as the output file tpe.

In the output directory, if the default folder shown is not what you want, then tap the Select button to navigate to and select the desired folder.

In Output Quality, the default is to use the Same quality found in the input file. I recommend using that choice.

At the bottom of the screen, outside of the long popup, tap the **Convert button**, which is not shown. The popup closes.

An ad may appear. If the ad includes sounds, then you can silence the ad by tapping the speaker icon in the ad. I always silence the ad. I am hesitant to give more instructions for dismissing the ad because these days different ads requires two or three taps. Think of navigating through the ad to dismiss it as a challenge.

Conversion of a short spoken tone takes very little time. You might not even notice the progress indicator in the Notifications bar.

If you want to install the app immediately, then use your Android device to scan the QR code shown in **illustration 12**. Your Camera app will display an option to open the Play Store; tap that option. Then the Play Store opens and shows the page for installing the Audio Converter app.

Illustration 12

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: John Krout is a retired software developer. He has been writing about and delivering presentations on interesting uses of personal computers since the early 1980s. In the 21st century, as digital tech became more powerful and widespread, he has also been writing and delivering presentations about interesting uses of smartphones, tablets, digital music, digital photography, Electric Vehicles (EVs) and Pluggable Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs). He lives in Arlington Virginia.