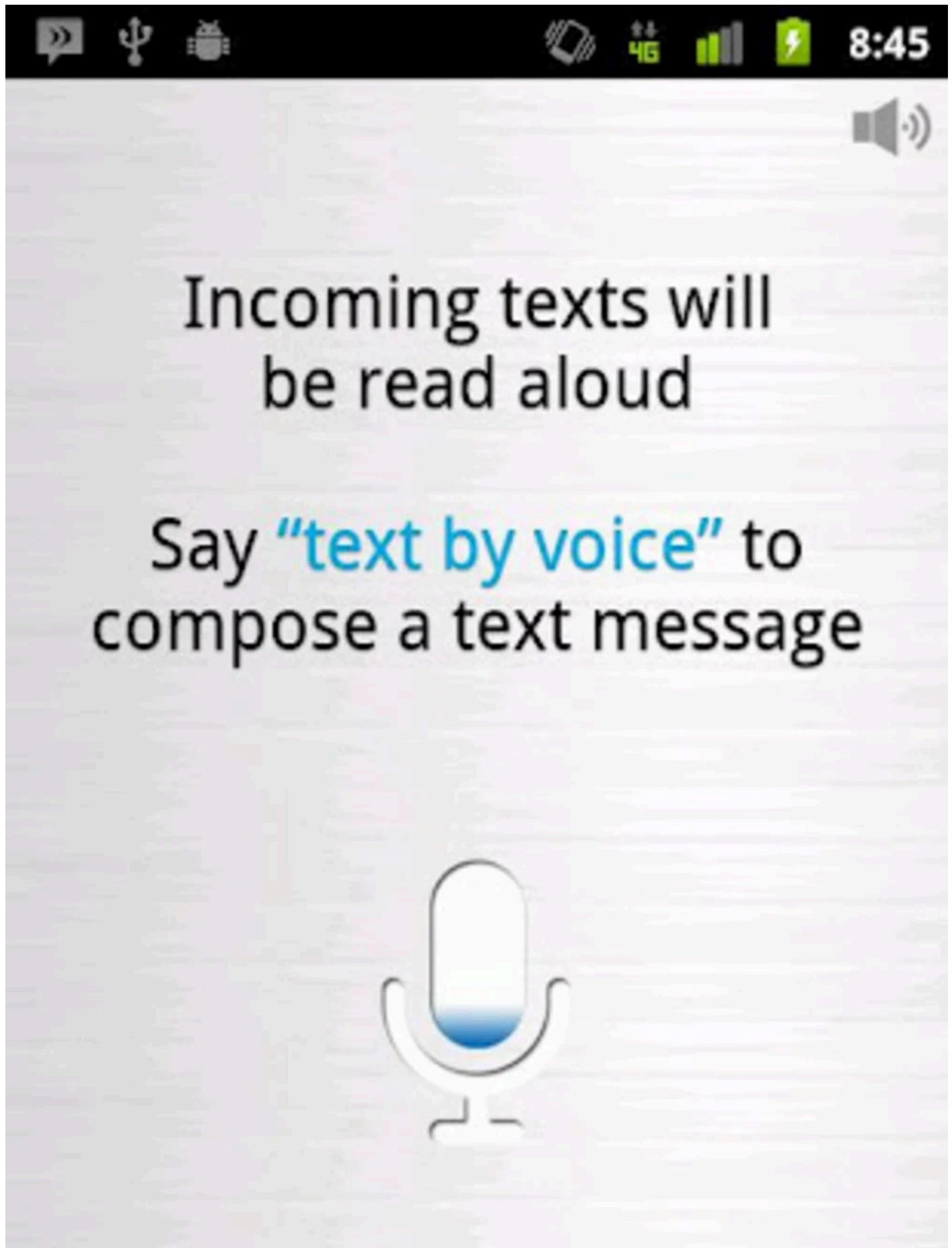
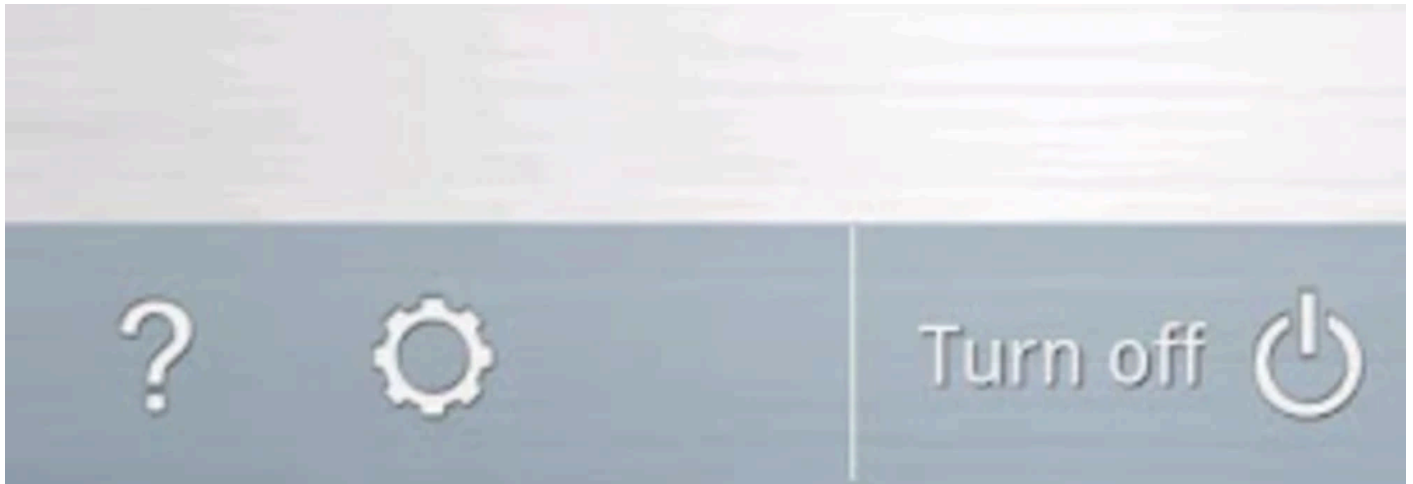


GADGETS

This hands-free texting app is easy to use, accurate





— Sonalight Text by Voice app Sonalight

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By Athima Chansanchai

Despite all the warnings and cautionary tales of accidents and deaths that come from texting while driving, some people will continue to do it. The latest app to allow for hands-free texting while driving stands out for its ease of use and accuracy.

ADVERTISING



[Sonalight Text by Voice](#) is a free [Android app](#) that gives drivers -- and those who'd rather speak than finger-tap messages -- the ability to send texts using only voice commands. What makes it different from the rest is its ease of use and accuracy.

(By the rest, we mean the plethora of apps such as StartTalking, VoiceTEXT, Voice Text Pro, Vlingo Speech-to-Text, My MotoSpeak, and so many more.)

[TechCrunch](#) tells us that the app has been around since October, but a recent update makes it [worth trying out now](#). The 3.3. version includes increased contact- matching accuracy (favoring recent contacts), and removal of the profanity filter (for those who want to curse).

Having used Google's built-in speech-to-text function specifically for texting and enduring the mismatched words that often come up, no matter how slowly or how I try to enunciate, I was curious about this program -- especially its accuracy.

(Also, because my phone is password-protected, I would have to enter that first, then tap into text messages, get into a specific thread or start a new one, and then tap the microphone button before I could access the speech-to-text function. All steps that could potentially lead to a life-threatening accident.)

The app is simple enough to use: Once installed and opened on a smartphone, all I did was say "Text by voice" and the voice prompts led me through the rest. It asked me who I wanted to text, and got it right on the first try. (That's half the battle.) Then it asked me to record the message, and read it back to me. Then it told me the message was sent. Both times I did it, I spoke at a normal pace, normal volume. Even through a congested voice (allergies!), it got it right.

The key to this, of course, are those handy voice verifications, so that theoretically, you'd never have to look at your phone while you're driving.

The app will also read incoming texts and give you a chance to respond, so long as you keep it running in the **background**. Turning it on and then off within its menu are probably the only occasions you'll need to touch your phone while using it, unless you want to adjust its settings (and for that, we'd definitely suggest pulling over or doing so before or after you're at your destination).

You can specify the app to turn on when you drive, or enable Bluetooth. You can set an auto responder for incoming text messages and use the app to make voice calls, again without having to look at the phone.

It will continue running in the **background**, waiting for you to say those magic words ("text by voice") that make it come alive, so it will drain your phone's batteries. (It even bypasses the phone in sleep mode -- and my password, which brings up a security issue -- but that does make it more convenient to send texts without having to go through the usual hoops.)

But you can turn it off by going into the menu and choosing that option. See how it works in the demo below.

Sonalight Text by Voice



Check out *Technolog* on [Facebook](#), and on Twitter, follow [Athima Chansanchai](#), who is also trying to keep her head above water in the [Google+](#) stream.



— Athima Chansanchai
