

Gadget Watch: Pen uses infrared, ultrasonic technology to make old monitors touch-ready

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LAS VEGAS (AP) -- Many people who have tried Microsoft's new Windows 8 operating system without a touch screen have hated it because of the inability to use touch and swipe commands to get things going. Now, a company has made a digital pen to allow people to use Windows 8 on their old monitors for less than the cost of buying a new touch-enabled computer.

The device was unveiled this week at the International CES, an annual showcase in Las Vegas for the latest smartphones, tablet computers and other consumer-electronic devices.

WHAT IT IS: E Fun, a West Covina, Calif.-based company, has come out with the Apen Touch8, a cordless pen that works in tandem with an attachment that plugs into the Windows computer's USB port.

HOW IT WORKS: The attachment, which is really an infrared and ultrasonic receiver, clips magnetically to the side of the screen, which can be as large as 17 inches diagonally. The pen emits an infrared beam out of its tip. The receiver attachment sends the pen's signals to the computer, which interprets its precise location.

Pushing down on the pen results in a separate ultrasonic signal, which is equivalent to a touch screen sensing when you are touching it. Just like that, you can swipe and tap your way through Windows 8. The pen runs on a watch battery, which should last about 500 hours and is replaceable.

WHY IT'S HOT: Windows 8, Microsoft Corp.'s effort to make desktop and laptop computers work more like tablet computers, was released in October to mixed reviews. A major problem is the fact that many of the features require a touch-screen monitor to work, making the experience unpleasant for those with older machines. Apen Touch8 offers a way for those with older computers to experience the newer touch-based functions.

AVAILABILITY: The pen is to go on sale in North America by the end of March for \$80.

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