

## **Barkings! | The Small Dog Apple Blog**

### **Kinesis →**

Posted 2008-06-25 12:17 in [Product-Reviews](#) by [Don Mayer](#)



In the past, I have written reviews of many ergonomic keyboards as alternatives to the Apple stock keyboards. My interest in ergonomic keyboards came from my experience with RSI – repetitive stress injury. Early on at Small Dog, I developed a serious case of carpal tunnel syndrome in both wrists. It was so severe that I ultimately needed surgery and opted to do both wrists at the same time. This led to some interesting moments for several weeks where I was pretty useless except for talking on the phone, but luckily, Hapy and Artie picked up the slack. While my surgeon told me I'll never suffer from CTS again, I have been a believer in ergonomic keyboards ever since.

My earliest ergonomic keyboard was the Apple Adjustable keyboard that made a good attempt to be more wrist-friendly, and I eventually moved on to the Kinesis Advantage Pro keyboard, which I've been using for several years now. This is the ultimate ergonomic keyboard; however, it is difficult to learn to use and I'm pretty much the only person at Small Dog that is able to use it. It took me about two weeks to recover my typing speed as I learned the keyboard, but once I did, the comfort was amazing and my speed and accuracy increased dramatically. One of the biggest barriers (other than the learning curve) has been the price of the Advantage Pro—it retails for about \$360, and even with our \$30 discount to \$329.99, it's a lot of money to spend!

Kinesis has just released a new keyboard called the FreeStyle, and they were kind enough to send me a sample to test. The keyboard was created with input from ergonomists and health professionals and provides adjustability that will meet most users' preferences. The FreeStyle Solo keyboard offers a range of distance between both keying modules (from zero to eight inches of separation) to accommodate a wide variety of shoulder widths. There are two add-on accessory bundles that give it additional versatility, and both include the essential wrist pads. The Incline accessory mounts the keyboard securely

to a base and allows for a fixed split and tented orientation. It has a 10 degree fixed tenting and the splay is adjustable up to 30 degrees. The VIP (V-Lifter and Integrated Palm supports) accessory allows for 10 and 15 degree tenting.

For my initial testing, I used the Incline accessory. It took me a little bit of time to adjust from the Advantage Pro, but I found the new FreeStyle Solo to be a great new ergonomic keyboard. True to form, it works without any drivers—just plug it in. The keyboard also includes some useful Hot Keys including Web Page forward and back, Beginning of line, End of line, Cut, Undo, Copy, Select All and Paste. Additional top line keys go beyond Apple's standard keyboard by offering Force Quit, Brightness, two Exposé actions, Dashboard, Play Audio and Audio Volume, Toggle Dock and more.

The keyboard includes double wide Escape, Delete and Backspace keys which enable faster typing (and correcting!). The quiet and tactile key switches have low force which reduces typing effort. I don't know if I will stay with the FreeStyle or go back to the more expensive Advantage Pro, but this is a very powerful new offering from Kenesis. They are the experts in ergonomic keyboards—at just \$99 for the keyboard and \$40 for either of the add-on kits, the FreeStyle is truly a value. If you do a lot of typing, you should consider this keyboard to help reduce RSI and increase your productivity and typing comfort. Highly recommended!