

8 TOP TIPS FOR RECORDING INTERVIEWS

You might be brand new to audio recording or just fed up getting poor quality transcripts back. If so, this is the article for you!

At Outsource-Typing we have extensive experience in the transcription process. We've compiled below a cheat sheet, feeding back some of our best tips to help things run as smoothly as possible for you on the day of your recording and beyond, into the transcript phase.

1. Trial and Test Equipment

- Perform a short test to check audio is being picked up clearly on the recording and all speakers are sitting at a suitable distance from the mic.
- Check battery levels and that everything is plugged in correctly!
- Remember to periodically check the indicator light on your recording equipment during the session.

2. Introductions and Identifying Speakers

- At the beginning of the recording, it is **essential** that each participant introduce themselves, spelling names if necessary, to enable the typist to then identify that person each time they speak as the meeting evolves. A longer introduction (e.g. full name, where from, how they travelled to the session) would be preferable where interviewees or participants have similar accents. This longer dialogue at the beginning can help typists pick up on distinguishing voice characteristics to make it easier to identify each speaker throughout the transcript.
- Remind all participants that the session is being recorded and to speak slowly, clearly and audibly for recording purposes.
- Encourage participants not to speak over each other.
- The interviewer / moderator could attempt on occasions to refer to the speaker upon completion of their comments to aid the typist in identifying speakers. This is especially helpful regarding participants who contribute less to the discussion over the piece.

If a person is unidentifiable within the recording, (UMS) (unidentified male speaker) or (UFS) (unidentified female speaker) will be inserted into the transcript down the left-hand margin.

3. Overspeaking

We do our best when people are talking over one another to pick out exactly what is being said, but this can be difficult at times. If this happens, prompt the person(s) to repeat themselves, separately, for the recording. If speech cannot be made out for these reasons, (overspeaking) will be inserted into the transcript.

4. Background Noise

While we are experts at completing even the trickiest of audio files (believe us, we've heard it all!), there are some things you can do to ensure your job is returned with less speech missing and also to a speedier timescale if you consider the below tips:

- Politely request all participants to switch mobile phones off or onto silent mode prior to commencing the group or interview session.

- Any internal telephones could be diverted either to voicemail or another line so as to avoid them ringing during the recording as this can interfere with the recording quality and render what is being said inaudible.
- It may not be possible to avoid, but water coolers, fans, air conditioning, stirring of tea and coffee, shuffling paperwork, tapping or banging on the table, people coming in and out of the room, etc., all cause background noise on the mic and can obscure what is being said. If possible, turn undesired equipment off. If a person enters the room it is advisable to curtail the discussion until they are seated and introduced.
- Sirens / heavy traffic noise / beeping horns / jet engine noise – please be aware that we can't hear over this – it is amplified! If you can curtail the discussion while there are sudden loud disturbances such as these it would be helpful.

If speech cannot be made out for any of the above reasons, (**inaudible**) will be inserted into the transcript and a time-stamp inserted to indicate the exact time-point of the discussion. You may want to go over these yourself to see if you can make out what has been said.

6. Inaudible Speech

We can boost volume and sound quality to a certain extent with our software, but we can't work miracles! If recording quality is too quiet this can lead to issues. People speak in a range of accents, tones and timbres, however excessively quiet or softly spoken people may require to be prompted to speak up for the recording. Likewise if someone is mumbling! To avoid embarrassing them or appearing rude by constantly asking them to speak up, you could ask the person to sit closest to the mic at the beginning of the session.

7. Industry Terms/Words

It's helpful to us if you spell any unusual names, words or terms for the purposes of the recording – or afterwards provide us with a "*crib sheet*" containing a list of likely used words.

8. Breaks

- You could consider designating a time for rest breaks that will not interfere with the recording of the session – after, say, 45-60 minutes.
- When returning from breaks, it's best to ensure everyone sits in the same seat to ensure continuity.