

# How to Record High Quality Audio for Transcription



**The Digital Fingers guide to record high quality audio for transcription:**

High quality transcripts are directly correlated to high quality audio; thus, the better the audio quality, the better the transcript. While this is stating the obvious, we want our customers to be completely satisfied with our transcripts. To do that, Digital Fingers is happy to provide the following suggestions to improve your audio quality.

A high quality recording has zero to no background noise, a single person speaking at any one time, and an even tone of voice for all speakers.

A poor recording has people speaking over each other, faint voices, or high levels of background noise.

## **Top tips:**

Keep your background noise down. Microphones are excellent at picking up even the faintest sounds. To prevent this, close all doors and keep side conversations under control. Point the microphone towards the speakers and away from other potential sources of noise.

It's not easy, particularly with motivated speakers, but do try to ensure only one person speaks at a time and that everybody speaks clearly and slowly.

Place the microphone where it is likely to pick up all the people who will be talking. It often helps to place the microphone an equal distance from everyone who is 'likely' to speak.

**Bonus tip:**

When you're conducting a panel or roundtable discussion, it's important to help us identify who's speaking. You'll want to ask each participant to introduce him or herself at the very beginning. It also helps if you address people by name as you go along, such as "So, Alex, do you agree with what Helga just said?" Or, "Can you add anything to Greg's comments, Ken?" Or even just, "Thanks, Jim. Dan?"

**Out advice:**

1. Record in a quiet place by choosing your venue carefully. Avoid sitting near sound speakers, open windows, or other factors that could contribute to background noise such as hardwood floors, high ceilings, etc. Avoid café noise from espresso machines, the chink of crockery etc.
2. Serve all refreshments before or after your interview takes place and be mindful that shuffling papers or coughing/sneezing can drown out your speaker!
3. Choose the right digital recorder by ensuring that the device has features that meet all of your requirements. In general, look for a device with different recording quality settings, adequate memory capacity, a choice of different file formats in which to save your recordings, and a high speed file transfer mechanism to your computer.
4. On digital recorders, make sure that voice activation is off. This will prevent words getting clipped off every time there is a significant pause.
5. For interview transcription and multiple speaker recordings it

is always better to use external microphones rather than built-in microphones.

6. Whether you use the recorder's built-in microphone or an external mike, keep it as close to the speaker(s) as possible. It will be easier for you to fill in the gaps for the interviewer rather than try to recreate what the interviewee said if the audio quality is bad.
7. Check the volume on-site at the beginning of any interview or meeting. Do a trial run; test your recording device, microphone position and sound levels before you kick-off. Speak with your subject for a minute or two and check the recording to get an idea of their sound level and the audio quality. Try to be aware when/if the ambience in the room changes.
8. Be sure to tell your interviewees when you will start recording to prevent general 'chit-chat' from getting recorded.
9. Once you've placed your recorder/microphone, leave it there. Digital recorders have surprisingly good range; moving them while recording just adds a level of (frequently deafening) sound that obscures what's being said.
10. During group interviews, if you wish to identify speakers then record your introductions and ask each interviewee to say their name each time they contribute. Additionally, you can thank each interviewee by name after each lengthy contribution to ensure the interviewee's name has been captured for transcription purposes.
11. If your interviewee is speaking very, very softly, you might try raising your own voice just a bit; this may encourage him or her to do the same in a subtle fashion. Alternatively ask them to repeat themselves every once in a while for a more direct approach.
12. Now that your interview has taken place be sure to keep the data safe. As soon as you have recorded your interview transfer it onto your computer. It is also worthwhile to keep a backup of the file on a flash drive or send a copy straight to your transcription service to get started as you continue to record.

Finally, to improve your transcriptions, be sure to provide us with a list of keywords used during the interviews and an agenda, or the actual questions asked. Also, please send us the correct spelling of the names of the people on the tape.