

## How to Get the Best Recording Using Audiotapes

*(High quality recordings make our job simpler and easier, resulting in the most accurate transcriptions executed in the least amount of time. Here are some important tips and tricks.)*

1. If you're using a hand-held device or desk-top device, try to use standard size cassettes (not micro cassettes), if possible. They tend to play back better on our Dictaphones. But this is not crucial. Micros are okay.
2. Try to get the longest playing cassettes you can find (usually 120 or 110 minutes). That way you won't have to turn the tape over too soon.
3. **Make sure you set the recorder for NORMAL** recording (or 2:4). If you do not set it for normal recording speed, then when we play it back on our Dictaphone machines, it will play too fast (and everyone will sound like chipmunks!) or the sound will be muffled. You can tell if the tape is set on normal speed by watching how fast the tape is turning: if the tape winds FAST that means it's on normal speed and the sound quality will be good. If it winds SLOW, it means it will either play too fast on our end or the sound quality will be bad.
4. **Make sure your batteries are charged or new**, otherwise you'll find out later that everyone sounds like chipmunks or talking really S-L-O-W to the point of inaudibility.
5. **Try to get everyone as close to the tape recorder as is comfortable so the recorder will pick up everyone's voices.** If this is not possible, you may want to use TWO recorders. Keep one closer to the person asking the questions, and the other one closer to the other speaker(s). If we can't pick up certain portions off one tape, we can always go back and listen to the second tape and type in any missing sections. (Also see "Options" section.)
6. If you're putting the recorder on a desk or table, it's a good idea to put a towel or sweater underneath the recorder. This will muffle out any ambient noise that may bounce off the table.
7. **Try to record in a quiet room.** If that's not possible, try to make sure everyone speaks loudly and clearly. Encourage people who tend to sit back in their chairs, look down when they speak, or just speak under their breath or very softly to speak up. Children and teens tend to speak like this, so encourage them to speak up.
8. **Try to make sure everyone speaks in turn (not over each other).** That may be hard when everyone gets excited, but just do the best you can. The better the recording, the better transcript!
9. Keep an eye on the tape or watch the clock and try to stop the conversation before the end of side A. That way, you won't miss any of the conversation when you flip the tape over.

10. Make sure you test the tape and recorder BEFORE you start the actual interview. Is everyone audible? Is the recording clear? Is the recorder set at the right speed? Do you need to move people closer to the mlf you are making a backup of your tapes, we prefer to have the original to type from.
11. Send us any information we can use as a reference (just in case something isn't clear on the tape, and to help with spelling of names, places, buzz words, etc.). Things such as Powerpoint slides, agendas, list of participants, brochures, etc. are all very helpful.

## OPTION A

One option would be purchase an inexpensive bi-directional or multi-directional mic. (You can get this from Radio Shack.) Even though you use the bi-directional or multi-directional mic, you should still make sure that all participants aren't too far away from the mic and make sure everyone speaks up.

## OPTION B

Another option is to purchase "lapel" mics. These are tiny little microphones that clip onto your shirt or lapel. These little things are very powerful and you will get the absolute best quality recording! You can get these at Radio Shack as well. You will also need to purchase a mixer (they come as small as a credit card). The mixer will allow you to have multiple channels so you can hook your lapel mic into the mixer and up to two to four other participants (depending on how many channels your mixer has). The mixer is then hooked up to your recorder. Remember to do a test first to make sure the recording levels are just right before you start the actual recording.

If you're planning to purchase a bi-directional, multi-diretional, or lapel mic, it's a good idea to bring your recorder with you so the salesman can help you pick out the right tools that will work best with your recorder.

## OPTION C

Digital recording is "all the rage" now. The sound quality is excellent (unless, of course, people mumble or there's a lot of background noise). And you don't have to worry about turning over any tapes. (Sound is recorded digitally.) You can record anywhere from 8 hours on up. After you're done, just save the recorded file to your hard drive, then either burn a CD or upload it to our server.

**Note: You must save your files as either a MP3, WMA, DSS, or a WAV file.** (However, WAV files are huge and may not fit on one CD and/or may not be able to be uploaded to the server due to time-outs.)

The most popular brand of digital recorder is by Olympus. To get the latest info, go to the Olympus Website then look for "Voice Recorders."