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Introduction

This Style Guide is designed to teach you the basics of creating a legal transcript according to our **Clean Verbatim for Legal transcription style**. It covers rules you will be expected to adhere to, including punctuation, grammar, spelling conventions, and tag usage. Learning and correctly implementing these guidelines will be necessary to pass the **Legal Prequalification Exam**, and will be the foundation you build upon to learn the additional rules necessary to pass the **Legal Entrance Exam**. Once you have tackled both exams, you'll be ready to begin your **probation** working on actual files for TranscribeMe's **Legal Phoenix** team.

General Expectations

You will be held to the following expectations in your work:

- **Guidelines:** Every file has a **STYLEGUIDE** panel on the right side of the WorkHub editor to tell you which Style Guide the file must be transcribed according to. Legal Phoenix handles multiple clients, who each require unique styles. It's important to **ALWAYS** check the style guidelines for **every file** and make sure you have the **most up-to-date pdf version** of that Guide downloaded.
- **Accuracy:** You must strive to capture **all speech relevant to the file**. For words you cannot hear or understand, use the appropriate tag(s) as detailed in the <u>Tags</u> section.
- Research: Every name, company, and term mentioned in the audio <u>must be spelled correctly and</u> <u>consistently</u>. It is your responsibility to use Google and any other tools at your disposal to determine proper spelling and formatting. If you find multiple accepted spellings, choose one and be consistent.
- **Spelling and Grammar:** You must demonstrate a **strong grasp** of English grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Carefully proofread and spell-check each file before submitting it.
- **Consistency:** Every file **must adhere** to the formatting rules of the appropriate Style Guide and display an overall consistency in spelling and punctuation style.
- **Communication:** If you encounter something unusual, such as an entirely silent or foreign language file, **please send a Help Desk ticket.**

Difficult Audio

Some files may be difficult to transcribe due to poor audio or speech patterns (thick accents, talking quickly, et cetera). We don't expect miracles, but please give your **best effort** even when transcribing challenging audio. Here are some tips for handling tricky files:

- **1. Replay:** Listening to problematic areas **multiple times** can help you make out what's being said. Try adjusting the audio speed down *and* up. Using an audio enhancing program or browser extension may help reduce background noise or clarify fuzzy audio.
- 2. Context: Listening through the entire file at least TWICE is crucial to deciphering words you struggled with the first time. You may hear the word or phrase spoken more clearly later in the file, you may become accustomed to the speakers' voices, or you might deduce what was said based on further context from later discussions in the file.
- 3. Read: Sometimes your ears can betray you. You should always read through your transcript without the audio to check for mistakes. If what you have transcribed makes no sense, you have likely misheard something. For example, if you think you hear, "Funs of people will be there," listen again and see if you can figure out your error. Maybe "Tons of people will be there," is what the speaker actually said. Never simply assume what you heard, read, or thought first must be correct.
- **4.** Tags: If you still cannot decipher what's being said after trying the above steps, then use the appropriate tag(s) as described in the Tags section.



General Formatting

Spacing Sentences

For this style, insert **one space** between sentences. Never use two. Press the spacebar **once** after each sentence. You can use **CTRL+F** or the WorkHub editor's **Find & Replace** feature to spot extra spaces in your file.

Changing Speakers

Every speaker in a file is given **separate lines** in a transcript. When another person takes their turn to speak, press Enter/Return **once** to begin a new line.



Speakers in official legal transcripts are given **speaker IDs** to make it easy to tell who's who when a transcript is read. You will **NOT** be tested on speaker identification in the **Legal Prequalification Exam**, but you will see some IDs in transcript examples throughout this guide, such as appears below.

MR. JONES I'm Don Jones appearing for the Plaintiff.

MS. AMES Hi, I'm Jill Ames for the Defense.

THE WITNESS And my name is Dave Torrel. I've been sworn in as the witness.

Q&A and Colloquy

Legal transcripts use one of two modes for speaker IDs, depending upon what is happening in the proceeding.

The standard mode is **Colloquy**, and is used for general conversational exchanges between the parties. Each speaker is identified depending on their role, such as surnames for lawyers (**MR. SMITH**) and titles for judges (**THE COURT**) or someone giving testimony (**THE WITNESS**).

The alternate mode is **Q&A**, and is used solely for when a sworn deponent or witness is being examined by a lawyer, investigator, or some other party legally allowed to elicit testimony. These speakers are identified simply as **Q** for the questioner and **A** for the answerer.



You will **NOT** be tested on Q&A and Colloquy in the **Legal Prequalification Exam**, but it's important to begin to understand the significance before you move on to the Legal Entrance Exam.

- **Q** And what's your name?
- **A** Tom Jenkins.
- **Q** Okay. And what's my name? Have we met before?
- **A** We have. You're Dennis Savoy.



Objections

During legal transcription, you may encounter lawyers making **objections**. An objection can be defined as "a formal protest to evidence, argument, or questions that are in violation of the rules of evidence or other procedural law."

There are **many** objections that may be made, depending on the situation. We encourage you to research and familiarize yourself with any legal terminology you encounter, particularly since lawyers may phrase their objections in unusual ways.

Here are some examples of **common objections** and how we format them:

Objection, hearsay.	Objection, leading.	Objection, relevance.	Objection, argumentative.
Objection, compound.	Objection, speculation.	Objection, foundation.	Objection, asked and answered.
Objection, assumes facts not in evidence.	Objection, privilege.	Objection, form.	Objection, non-responsive.

Breaking Paragraphs

In addition to creating a new line for each change of speaker, we also split long, single-speaker monologues into multiple paragraphs at **obvious changes of topic** or when a speaker **addresses someone else**.

As with a change of speaker, hit Enter **once** to create a new line. Paragraph sizes will vary and are sometimes subject to context and a transcriber's judgement. **4-5 sentences per paragraph** may be a helpful rule of thumb.

Q Okay. So a little housekeeping. We're on Zoom, and so this is going to be maybe a little more cumbersome than if it was in person. So we may have to work a little bit harder than usual. The court reporter here, April, is going to be taking down everything that we're saying.

That includes everything that I ask, everything that Mr. Kimmel and Ms. Svane ask. So it's going to be important that we try not to talk over one another. In addition, I'm going to need you to provide verbal answers. So yeses and nos as opposed to uh-huh or uh-uhs or head nods, et cetera; does that make sense to you?

A It does.

MR. CARRUTH Objection, misstates testimony. I apologize. I misspoke there. You can go ahead, Mr. Darmody.

THE COURT REPORTER We are now on the record at 11:19 AM. We are here to take the deposition of John Smith in the matter of Rick Dixon v. Daryl Grimes. My name is Alice Quinn. I'll be capturing today's proceedings via specialized recording software.

The witness has confirmed themselves with a government ID.

Will everyone in attendance please state your appearances?



As you can see in the example, additional, uninterrupted paragraphs for the **same** speaker do **NOT** require further speaker IDs.

You will **NOT** be graded on paragraph breaks in the Legal Prequalification Exam.



General Spelling

Regardless of the speakers' accents in the audio, we transcribe using **American spelling and punctuation**. For grammar and spelling issues not addressed in this Style Guide, TM defers to the **Chicago Manual of Style** (CMOS) and **Merriam-Webster dictionary** (M-W). (Purchasing a subscription for CMOS or M-W is **NOT** required.)

Adhere to these spellings in your work for Legal Phoenix:

	OK or 'kay			<u> </u>				health care
Yes →	okav	l all rìght	l a lot	et cetera	US and USA	email	internet	healthcare

Oral Spelling

Letters spoken individually are capitalized. If a speaker spells out a word, we transcribe the letters spoken, with each capital letter separated by hyphens. Use conventional formatting for symbols in acronyms, numbers, et cetera. If a document provides something such as a case number from a court docket, you may format the number as it appears in that official document.

The next letter after **J** is, obviously, **K**.

I expect you to treat each other with respect, R-E-S-P-E-C-T.

That's LLC, **L**, Lima, twice, and **C**, Charlie, once.

We're here in the matter of Case Number 2024R10324.

Email Addresses

Format email addresses as per standard convention. If the speaker spells out the words, you may transcribe the address as it would appear in an email.

Said: My email is Frank at Yahoo dot com.

Type: My email is **frank@yahoo.com**.

Said: My email is F-R-A-N-K at Y-A-H-O-O dot com.

Type: My email is **frank@yahoo.com**.

If the speaker both says **and** spells out the address for clarification, transcribe everything they say.

My email is Frank, F-R-A-N-K, at Yahoo, Y-A-H-O-O, dot com, C-O-M.

My email is Frank, F-R, A as in apple, N as in Neptune, K, at yahoo.com.

Research

It is **your responsibility** to research any names and terms mentioned in your file to ensure you format them properly. Format company names as in the main text of their website (not the stylized logo), or refer to the copyright at the bottom of their web page.

Yes →	adidas iPhone	MEDITECH	Toys"R"Us	7-Eleven	NBA	E-Tran	Kirkland & Ellis	
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Medications

For brand-name medications stylized in all caps, we capitalize the first letter only. Generic drug names are lowercase. We recommend referencing **drugs.com** to distinguish brand names from generic.

es →	Tylenol Tums	Zyrtec	acetaminophen	ibuprofen	cetirizine	clonidine
------	--------------	--------	---------------	-----------	------------	-----------

Profanity & Trigger Warnings

Legal files **may** cover graphic and disturbing content. Clients may not provide them ahead of time, so not every potentially upsetting file is guaranteed to have a trigger warning. Our clients generally expect us to transcribe what is discussed without censoring. If you feel uncomfortable transcribing a file for any reason, you may always cancel out.

Be aware, Legal Phoenix files require you to **commit** before you begin working, so make sure you've examined a file thoroughly **beforehand** in case its content may make you unable to complete it. Repeatedly abandoning files you've committed to is a violation of the team rules, and will eventually earn you warnings from the admin team.

No matter the reason, you should **always** be as sure as you can be that a file is within your capabilities before you perform any work on it.



CV for Legal

The default transcription style at TranscribeMe is **Clean Verbatim (CV)**, an approach to transcribing that ensures the transcript is clear, succinct, easy to read, and accurately conveys the speech contained in the audio. For our **Clean Verbatim for Legal (CVL)** files, we want to clean up **some** of the speech to make it easier to read, but we generally **don't edit** what was said. The most common features of speech altered in CVL are stutters, stammers, informal pronunciation, and nonverbal words. This section will delve into further details of how to transcribe your audio file following **TranscribeMe's Clean Verbatim for Legal (CVL)** style.

ATTENTION

Always use American English spellings in Clean Verbatim for Legal.

Conversation to Include

In CVL, we transcribe the **main speaker(s) and their interactions** with anyone else in the file. This typically means legal transcripts will focus upon the main events of a proceeding: a witness giving their testimony in a deposition, lawyers giving their arguments before a judge at a hearing, et cetera. Sometimes, it may be necessary to break up another main speaker's dialogue if someone else interrupts the flow of conversation, like a lawyer entering an objection to a question from opposing counsel, or asking for a prejudicial statement from a witness to be stricken from the record.

Automated Voices

We do **NOT** transcribe automated voices, such as an answering machine, public address system, or a device announcing that recording has begun. **ONLY** transcribe these voices if a main speaker **responds** to them, like someone telling Siri to be quiet. In such a case, Siri would be given her own speaker line. If the speakers ignore automated voices, you may also.

Background Speakers

Sometimes, general chatter may be audible in the background, such as a deponent's family coming through their mic on Zoom, or the audience in a courtroom talking while court is not in session. **ONLY** transcribe these voices if the file's **main speakers** interact with or acknowledge the other speaker(s).

For example, if a judge is giving instructions to a jury, but someone mistakenly walks into the courtroom and asks the judge if he's in the right place, this exchange must be transcribed. Or, in the case of a deponent's family talking in the background, you would transcribe a lawyer asking who that is and a family member responding. Typically, whispered conversations amongst lawyers while other conversations are happening are **NOT** transcribed, as they're likely discussing privileged and private legal matters. We also avoid transcribing mutters and whispers from a speaker reading a document aloud to themselves.

💎 TIP 💎

In legal terms, unnecessary speech that is therefore not transcribed is referred to as **non-germane**.



Stutters, Stammers, and Thinking Sounds

Remove partial words and/or sounds made while a speaker is stumbling over their thoughts. **Keep** full words.

Said: Re-repeated s-s-sounds such as, uh, st-st-st-stammers and, um, stutters should not... buh... da da da... be tr-transcribed.

Type: Repeated sounds such as stammers and stutters should not be transcribed.

Said: I keep saying **par--** partial words and I know I **sh-- shou--** shouldn't.

Type: I keep saying partial words and I know I shouldn't.

Said: The F-- FA-- FF-- the FFA supports farmers of America. It's ri-- right in the name.

Type: The-- the FFA supports farmers of America. It's right in the name.

Replace **mm-hmm** or **mm-mm** with **uh-huh** or **uh-uh** if necessary.

Said: Please use clear verbal responses to my questions, like yes and no. Don't just go **mm-hmm** or **mm-mm**.

Type: Please use clear verbal responses to my questions, like yes and no. Don't just go uh-huh or uh-uh.

Use huh? as a nonverbal response to indicate a speaker did not hear or understand something.

THE COURT Mr. Johnson, did you hear what your lawyer said?

THE WITNESS Huh?

THE COURT Counsel, maybe you should repeat the question.

Conjunctions and Interjections

Include conjunctions and interjections at the beginning, middle, or end of sentences as spoken. If a speaker finishes their thought with **or**, **so**, or **but**, we offset it with a comma.

A And I wanted to get a new dog, but.

Q Ah, okay. Yeah, yeah, yeah. So why didn't it work out?

A Well, it was just like, "This dog won't work."

Q Aw, that's too bad. So was that the only reason, or?

A Oh, and he kind of smelled too, so.

Q Ugh. That's a shame.

Contractions

Transcribe all contractions as spoken aside from the following **CVL exceptions**:

Yes →	could have	should have	would have
No →	could've	should've	would've



Slang

Transcribe informal words with their proper spelling, **NOT** based on pronunciation or accent. **ONLY** use the following exceptions if the speaker actually says it that way. Gotcha = gotcha. Got you = got you.

Yes →	y'all	ain't	goto	ha	alls	l'ma				
No →	sorta	kin	da	wa	nna	gonna	gotta	coulda	goin'	ya
Yes →	sort o	t of kind of		wa	nt to	going to	got to	could have	going	you
No →	yep or	yup	cuz	or 'ca	ause					
Yes →	yes or	yeah	beca	ause	•					

Said: Pacifically, I axed 'im if he was gonn' go ta 'em stores where they be sellin' milk. I coulda

just gone myself, but.

Gotcha. Well, y'all ain't gonna believe this, but I'ma talk ta him 'bout that right now. Ya hear me?

Type: Specifically, I asked him if he was going to go to them stores where they be selling milk. I

could have just gone myself, but.

Gotcha. Well, y'all ain't going to believe this, but I'ma talk to him about that right now. You hear me?

Incorrect Grammar

Transcribe incorrect grammar as spoken. This can range from violation of subject-verb agreement rules to plain bad English. Do **NOT** edit their speech. Our job is to **preserve what was said**, not make it sound good.

Them trees, they got so much locusts in them.

My dad want me go to store because want a apple.

Unconventional Words

Nonstandard words should be included as spoken, using the most common or logical spelling you can find. If a speaker makes up a word, spell it out as best you can.

Then you do the same steps, da, da, and then da. Sha-doo-bop. That's all it is.

We had an abso-freaking-lutely fantabulistic day.



Crutch Words

A crutch word is an utterance (often a verbal tic) that adds **no meaning** to what is said. In CV for Legal, we transcribe **ALL** crutch words, punctuating them with commas as necessary. We **OMIT** hesitations or thinking sounds such as **uh**, **ah**, **um**, **er**.

You know, I mean, if the speaker, like, says this, okay, we kind of want to, like, keep it, you know, the same, right?

In the below examples, **like** and **you know** are **NOT** crutch words. They are functional parts of the sentence.

He was like, "What do you think?" (Like is often used to introduce a quote.)

She was gone for like a week. (Like is an approximation in this instance.)

Do you know what time it is? (You is the target of the question.)

You know she would never do that. (You is the target of the statement.)

False Starts

A false start occurs when a speaker stops mid-sentence and then begins speaking again. They may correct themselves or change track entirely. **Keep** all false starts, marking them with **double dashes** followed by a space before the next letter. The dashes always attach to the word that precedes them.

Here's an example of-- this is a false start.

Did you just say-- wait, can you repeat that?

Here's an example where the speaker decides to-- I'm changing direction mid-sentence.

My son said the lion was his-- the tiger was his favorite animal at the zoo.

If a speaker is stuttering and only pronouncing parts of words, **OMIT** those **partial words**.

Said: Sh-- sh-- she said there-- there's no train-- training course run-- running today.

Type: She said there's no training course running today.

Said: The cat was **bl--** white. Its eyes were **gr--** yellow.

Type: The cat was white. Its eyes were yellow.

Interruptions

In conversation, speakers often interject or talk over one another. Use a double dash at the end of a line to indicate an **interruption**. Likewise, use the double dash at the **beginning** of a line to indicate that the speaker's thought is being continued. Always strive to break up speech as soon as another speaker interrupts.

Mid-sentence Interruption

- **A** I think I was there around--
- **Q** Please give an exact time.
- **A** --5:00 PM. Okay, it was 4:45.

Quote Interruption

- **Q** You stated that he said, "I'll bring you the documents--"
- **A** Yes, he did.
- **Q** "--on Friday afternoon."



Nonverbal Responses

Only three nonverbal words are allowed in CV for Legal: uh-huh, uh-uh, and huh?

We keep **uh-huh** for *yes* and **uh-uh** for *no* when they are the **sole response** to a question. Omit them if further speech follows.

Sole Response

- **Q** So you went straight home after that?
- A Uh-huh.
- **Q** But you didn't get your shopping done?
- A Uh-uh.

Further Response

- **Q** So you went straight home after that?
- **A Uh-huh.** I went home and went to bed.
- **Q** But you didn't get your shopping done?
- **A** Uh-uh. I had to get milk the next day.

Feedback Words

Feedback words are any generic word or phrase spoken while someone is talking, typically to indicate that the other person is listening or to acknowledge what the other speaker says. Transcribe **all feedback words**, (*yeah*, *right*, *okay*, *et cetera*) even as interruptions.

As noted in the previous section, **nonverbal responses** (*uh-huh*, *uh-uh*) are **omitted** unless they are the sole response to a question.

General Feedback

THE COURT What we can't do is have jurors wandering the halls while we sort this out.

MR. JOSEPH Right

THE COURT So we need to get Ms. Stefano in here and resolve this immediately.

MR. JOSEPH Yeah.
THE COURT You get me?

MR. JOSEPH Of course, Your Honor. Absolutely.

Feedback Interruptions

- A So I last saw Amy around--
- **Q** Okay
- **A** --summertime, but we--
- O Right
- A --didn't live together until--
- **Q** I understand.
- **A** --after she left Rory.



Titles and Ranks

Write out professional titles and military ranks when used without the owner's name. **Capitalize** if used in direct address. **Lowercase** if used in general reference. **Lowercase** generic titles such as sir, miss, or ma'am unless beginning a sentence.

Hey, **Doctor**, could you say that again?

I'm sure **the doctor** will come into the courtroom any moment.

Defense calls **Doctor Jamison** to testify as to the mental state of the accused.

My name is Investigator Joe Bloggs.

Investigator, please take the stand to be sworn.

The **sergeant** wasn't available.

I know Sergeant Saunders personally.

You won't be needing your purse, miss.

Sir, please close the door on your way out.

You're the only information technology professional in the office, correct?

I am Information Technology Professional Amy Lewis.

Do **NOT** use Mrs. or Miss with a female person's name, no matter how it's spoken. Use only Ms.

So we have Mr. Carmody and his wife Ms. Carmody here with us today and also their daughter Ms. Lewis.

Repeated Words

If the exact same word(s) are repeated once or several times in a row in an unintentional, stuttering fashion, we call that a repetition.



Some legal styles have rules about removing repetitions for lawyers and judges, who prefer to their transcripts less cluttered. You will **NOT** be tested on those rules in the **Legal Prequalification Exam**.

When a speaker repeats themselves, **keep all full words** and mark the repetition(s) with a double dash just as you would a false start.

THE COURT Do we want **to go-- to go** off the record?

O What time **did-- did** the accident occur?

MR. SMITH I think-- I think I want to start with my expert witness.

A I-- I-- I did-- did tell the truth.

If the words are clearly being **intentionally repeated** for emphasis, use a **comma**.

- A It was very, very cold, and we were there for a long, long time.
- **Q** No, no, no. That's not what I asked you at all. I don't care how cold it was.

If any speaker repeats an entire sentence, keep **all** the sentences.

A I've always been straight with you. I've always been straight with you. Always.



Tags

Tags are **always** in lowercase letters, even at the beginning of a sentence, and within square [] brackets. Any tag **MUST** be spelled and formatted exactly as it appears in the Style Guide.



The utilization of the [inaudible] tag can be subjective. With this in mind, you should use it **as little as possible** when transcribing the audios for the **Legal Prequalification Exam**. It is, however, important to learn and understand its usage for the future.

[inaudible]

Use the **[inaudible]** tag in place of speech you cannot make out due to the speaker's accent, someone talking over them, poor audio quality, a noise obscuring the words, or a term you couldn't figure out after researching.

ALWAYS strive to transcribe **as much of the problem area as possible** before using a tag. We strongly recommend revisiting all of your [inaudible]s before submitting a file, just to see if you can clear any of them once you're more familiar with the speakers and the context. Clients prefer to see **very few** [inaudible] tags in their completed transcripts.

A We were looking at **[inaudible]** when we first noticed the problem.

Be sure to **punctuate** an inaudible tag as if it were speech.

MR. FUDD I was just [inaudible]-- I just-- I wanted to know for sure.

MS. AMES But the weather got [inaudible]. We had to go home.

THE COURT [inaudible]?

Do not use **[inaudible]** if the audio cuts out entirely. Mark the last full word with a double dash and resume transcribing when speech resumes.

Q So you were about-- sorry, I accidentally unplugged myself. Where was I?

Do not use **[inaudible]** if there is a gap in the audio and a speaker's line obviously begins in the middle of their speech. Capitalize the first clear word you can make out. Do **NOT** use double dashes to start the line.

- **A** I thought I had made it clear I wanted Greta to bake for me.
- **Q** The cake for the wedding. How many times had she done that?
- **A** Sorry, can you repeat that? I didn't hear your first few words.
- **Q** Right, right. I asked how many times Greta had refused to bake a cake for your wedding.



Avoid using **[inaudible]** if a speaker whispers or trails off into mumbles. Also avoid using it in scenarios of heavy crosstalk. Double dashes are preferred in both of these scenarios to indicate that clear speech could not be captured at that point.

A All I was saying was that she--

Q Sorry, you trailed off for the last few words there. What was that?

A Oh, sorry. My mother always said I'm a mumbler. I said she never kept up her end of the arrangement.

MR. WATERS Well, that's not what your client--

MR. GRIFFIN I have to protest, that's--

MR. WATERS --Tuesday when we were in court.

MR. GRIFFIN I'm trying to make an objection. Can I finish?

ATTENTION

The **[inaudible]** tag is generally meant to mark areas where there **might be speech**, but you simply cannot understand it well enough to transcribe it. It should **NEVER** be used to mark silences, audio interruptions, or noises that are not speech.

Numbers and Symbols

When transcribing numbers and symbols, it is important to convey what the speaker says in a suitable, readable format. When in doubt about the speaker's intent, you may spell out the numbers as spoken.

- **A** I asked him how much the burger was and what time he got back home.
- **Q** And what did he say?
- A He said it was about **six fifty**.
- **Q** What was? The burger or the time?
- **A** I don't know.
- Use **words** for zero through ten: zero, one, two, three...
- Use **numerals** for numbers greater than ten: 11, 12, 13, 14...
 - Use numerals for consistency with 11+ of the same thing. (10 or 11 cookies | approximately 6 out of 14 candidates)
- Use **numerals** for percentages. Spell out the word "**percent**." Do **NOT** use the % symbol.
- Use **numerals** for money.
- Use a **currency symbol** for money **if it is said**, but only use the approved currency symbols \$, £, and €. (455 dollars = \$455 | 22 bucks = 22 bucks | 12 thousand pounds = £12,000 | 30 euros = €30)
- Use **ampersand** (&) if it is the common formatting of a name. (Smithers & Phelps)
- Use **words** for other symbols except for conventional formatting or a trademarked name.

Do **NOT** use symbols for general references, nonstandard numbers, ranges, or currencies not listed above.

How many US dollars are in a Canadian dollar?

What percent of my time would you need?

It'd be around 30-something percent.

I can't believe you paid 60 bucks for a pair of socks.

He owes me 350 smackaroos.



Ranges and Series

For a **range** or **series**, spell out any **common denominator** shared between values, but follow our standard number rules for formatting the rest. We spell out the word "**to**" when used in a range. Do not use a hyphen. Use a **comma** between numbers if the speaker doesn't use a connecting word such as **or**, **to**, **and**, et cetera.

It would take 13 to 14 **hundred** man-hours to get this done. **(Hundred is the common denominator.)** I need 30, 40 **thousand** widgets by next week.

There were maybe three to four **hundred thousand** people there.

Spell out **symbols** if they apply to multiple numbers spoken in the immediate context.

Maybe 50 or 60 percent of my time is actually useful. We had three donations of 30, 40, and 50 thousand dollars. It was several days of gathering, say, 3, 15, 25, 80, maybe 25 euros.

If multiple numbers occur within the same sentence or paragraph, format them **consistently** in the immediate context. If you must use numerals for one number in a certain category, **use numerals for all in that category**. Items in one category may be formatted as numerals while items in another are spelled out.

A mixture of buildings - one of 103 stories, five of 50 or more, and a dozen of only 3 or 4 - has been suggested for the area. (The number of buildings is written out. The stories in the buildings, however, are numerals.)

He had 15 ties but only 2 socks. (Both are in the same category, articles of clothing.)

It's \$3 for one and I had five of them.

Terms and Names

Transcribe common terms and names according to **standard convention**, even if it clashes with our usual style for spelling, numbers, symbols, and punctuation. Make thorough use of Google and any other resources at your disposal to confirm the industry standard method of formatting a term.

- Q&A / R&D / M&A
- and/or / 50/50 / 24/7
- Mazda 6 / Windows 7 / iPhone 5s
- Elizabeth II / World War I (Said: Elizabeth the second, World War One)
- type 2 diabetes
- 6'2" (Said: six two or six foot two or six foot two inches, referring to height)
- a Title IV school
- Interstate 7
- 2x4s / 8.5x11 (Said: two by fours, eight and a half by eleven)
- 401(k)
- K-8 (Said: K through eight, K to eight, or K eight)
- X-ray

Phone Numbers

- USA: 1-508-555-2232 / 1-800-686-MORE
- UK: 44 7700 900632

Serial Numbers

- Patient ID number 0543268
- Product number 2256-4012 (Include dashes if spoken or known from context.)



Estimates and Large Numbers

When a speaker gives a **rough estimate** of a large number, spell it out in words.

Tens of thousands of birds ate a couple hundred pancakes.

It cost hundreds of dollars to fix dozens of fallen fences.

My car is worth thousands, but my house is worth hundreds of thousands.

Exact numbers used as part of an **estimation** still follow our usual rules.

- Eight or so cats
- 30-some thousand bean bags
- 50-plus years old

Very **large numbers** such as *million* and larger - *billions*, *trillions*, et cetera - are spelled out. The number part follows our usual rules. Use **numerals** entirely for **very specific** large numbers.

- Five million chocolate bars
- 15 billion gallons
- 10,506,012 diapers

Dates

- Use **numerals** (08/26/86 | the 23rd | 1 October 1940 | 5th of August)
 - Format dates spoken as numbers with MM/DD/YY or MM/DD/YYYY, using **zeros** as placeholders (**said:** five, nine, eighty-two; **transcribe:** 05/09/82)
- When only month and year are said, **no** comma between them (May '94 | June 2000)
- '70s, '90s (**no** apostrophe before the *s*)
- Use **ordinals** if they are spoken (**said:** the fourth of July, **transcribe:** the 4th of July)
- Use a **comma** after day and year in full dates (It was on May 8th, 2023, that he was sentenced.)

Time

- Keep o'clock if said (10 o'clock, 5 o'clock)
- Add a **colon** and **zeros** if only the **hour** is said (seven = 7:00, ten = 10:00)
- Transcribe complex phrases **as spoken** (a quarter till 7:00, 15 after 5:00, ten past 9:00)
- Transcribe full times with a **colon** (7:25, 12:15, 2:11, 9:00)
 - o Do **NOT** add a zero before the hour.
- Transcribe **AM** and **PM** in all caps with no punctuation (5:30 PM, 9:00 AM)
- Transcribe military time with **numerals** (Fifteen hundred = 1500 | oh seven hundred hours = 0700)
 - Do **NOT** use a colon with military time.

Measures of Time

Transcribe measures of time according to the zero to ten rule.

It took **five days** for the package to arrive.

I was there for over **nine hours**.

He's been in jail for six weeks now.

I went on an 18-month sabbatical.

We'll continue this in 14 days.

It took me 30 minutes to drive two miles.

It's **five minutes** past 3:00.



Fractions

Spell out fractions. Any whole number preceding the fraction will follow our standard number rules.

- Eleven-thirteenths
- Three and a half apples
- 12 and one-tenth of a percent

Fractions used for measurements **may** be written as numerals to comply with standard formatting convention or to make the sentence easier to read.

Said: To build this porch, I need some two by four studs, some one by two by eights, a box of one and a quarter inch screws, and a box of two and a half inch screws.

Type: To build this porch, I need some **2x4** studs, some **1x2x8s**, a box of **1-1/4 inch** screws, and a box of **2-1/2 inch** screws.

or.

Type: To build this porch, I need some **2x4** studs, some **1x2x8s**, a box of **1 and 1/4 inch** screws, and a box of **2 and 1/2 inch** screws.

Always Numerals

- Human Ages and Heights (5-year-old child | 5' tall woman | I'm 6'3")
- Dates (**said:** August fifth, eight five; **type:** August 5th, 08/05)
- Time (5:00 AM | 6:00)
- Addresses (6525 1st Street)
- Wards and districts (11th District)
- Decimals (99.6 degrees | point six = 0.6)
- Exhibit numbers (Exhibit 15)
- Measurements (8x8 square timber post | 10 milligrams | 20/20 vision | 5 feet away)
- Money (\$5 | \$53,625)
- Percentages (45 percent | 33.3 percent)
- Scales (My pain is around a 3 out of 10 today. | I'd rate it 1 out of 5.)
- Pages, paragraphs, lines, articles, subsections, chapters, parts, volumes, media, et cetera (page 2 | under Exhibit 4 | 2nd paragraph | line number 2 | in article 6 | clause 2b | chapter 19 | start of media 2 | end of part 3 | Bates number 0000180)
 - **NOTE:** Use numerals even if the number given is an **ordinal**. (the 2nd chapter | in the 6th paragraph)
- Mathematical equations (50 times 2 divided by 4 minus 5 plus 10)
- Religious references (John 3:16)



Punctuation

You are expected to demonstrate a firm grasp of sentence structure and punctuation in your work at TranscribeMe. This Style Guide is **not** intended to be a thorough reference for English punctuation. However, what follows may be helpful for situations specific to transcription and to prevent common mistakes.

Run-On Sentences

Whenever possible, break up long-winded or run-on sentences into separate full sentences. In doing this, it's okay to start a sentence with a conjunction, but don't make the sentences choppy.

Sentence Fragments

Don't break up long sentences by separating them into sentence fragments, i.e., incomplete sentences. Even if a speaker pauses between clauses, please punctuate as per standard English conventions. It helps to proofread and punctuate without listening to the audio so as not to be influenced by the speaker's style of speech.

Do **NOT** join incomplete sentences with a semicolon.

No →	I love speaking in long sentences. Although they can be tough to transcribe.
No →	I love speaking in long sentences; although they can be tough to transcribe.
Yes →	I love speaking in long sentences, although they can be tough to transcribe.

Single Dashes

You may use single dashes to offset information within a sentence when either **a complete sentence** or **a list of items** is inserted into the main sentence, **if** the sentence outside the dashes would still flow if the text between the dashes were removed. Put a single space before and after each dash.

As soon as we go to the bookstore - there are several of them down this street alone - we can go home.

We talked to three major tech company founders - **Bill Gates of Microsoft, Sergey Brin of Google, and Steve Jobs of Apple** - about what they feel made those companies succeed.

If the additional information is **neither** a list **nor** a complete sentence, use commas rather than dashes. If the surrounding sentence would not be cohesive if you removed the additional information, treat it as a false start.

As soon as we go to the bookstore, which is down the street, we can go home.

The teacher, **who is obviously really smart**, thought my idea was inventive.

As soon as we go to the bookstore-- there are several of them down this street alone. After the store, we can go home.



Punctuation Between Single Dashes

For questions inserted between dashes, punctuate with a question mark before the closing dash. Use a semicolon rather than a period to separate two sentences between single dashes.

After we left the theater - have you seen Avengers yet? - we decided to get ice cream.

We need to make the desserts - you make apple pie; I'll make a cake - before we are ready to leave.

Colons and Semicolons

Colons and semicolons should be used sparingly in transcription, under the following conditions.

Use a **colon** when a complete sentence introduces a list.

I will need very few supplies for **school:** pens, paper, and highlighters.

Use a **colon** when a complete sentence introduces another complete sentence or thought.

Let me assure you of this: our potential with Africa is limitless.

The word was **out:** smoking causes cancer.

Use a **colon** when a complete sentence introduces a question.

Now, let me ask you this: do-- did-- do you recall the time that happened?

My question was: why did you do that?

I asked you **this: did** you contact the police?

And so, I start off the deposition by asking you first: have you testified in a deposition setting before?

Use a **semicolon** to join two closely related sentences without a conjunction.

I don't like ice **cream**; I prefer cake.

Use a **semicolon** to separate items in a complex list where the items contain internal commas. The semicolon in such cases clearly distinguishes each list item.

I'm going to the beach, and I'm going to bring, A, an alligator-shaped beach towel, which I will lie down on all day; B, a butter sandwich, so I'll have something to eat; and C, my favorite crime TV show downloaded to my tablet.

Adelaide, Australia; Rotorua, New Zealand; Taveuni, Fiji; and Hauula, Hawaii are my favorite vacation spots.

Use a **semicolon** to join a complete sentence with a short, trailing, generic question prompting someone to give simple confirmation. These tag-along questions must be **two words or more** and always start with a **verb**. You will encounter situations like this frequently with lawyers doing Q&A.

How long ago was that; do you know?

You were inside the building; is that correct?

The patient's medical record indicates they will need a pacemaker for life; did I read that right?

But that doesn't make sense; does it?

That won't change the past; will it?



Do **NOT** use semicolons to tack on unique questions that seek more details than just yes or no. Punctuate such questions independently.

No →	You're saying there were lots of people at the party; how many were there?
Yes →	You're saying there were lots of people at the party? How many were there?

Commas

This section will outline a few quick guidelines to prevent common comma errors. If you need more help with comma usage, you can find explanations for specific rules on the Grammarly Blog.

Before a Conjunction Between Two Complete Sentences

Use a **comma** before a conjunction connecting two complete sentences. You may omit the comma for short sentences of fewer than 10 words.

She looked over my **proposal**, and she approved of the whole thing. She looked over my proposal and she approved it.

Oxford Comma (a.k.a. Serial Comma)

Use a **comma** after each item in a list of three or more, including the final item before the conjunction. If the list items are separated by conjunctions, do not use commas.

We had apples, bananas, and strawberries in the fruit salad.

We had apples and bananas and strawberries in the fruit salad.

Direct Address

Use a **comma** to offset a name or title used to address someone. Use **two commas** if the name or title is in the middle of the sentence.

I told you, sir, that this wouldn't work.

Is that all your questions for today, Counsel?

Jim, you didn't even give it a chance.

Thanks for your input, Nancy.

And, Mr. Marlowe, that's all we have for you.

How many surgeries have you performed, Doctor?

Interjections and Adverbs

Use a **comma** (or two) to offset interjections and adverbs.

Oh, I don't know about that.

Fortunately, he agreed with my idea.

He wasn't paying attention and ran into a fence, basically.

The toddler was wearing a sturdy helmet, **thankfully**, the day she fell off her tricycle.



Confirmation Words

Use a **comma** when a question ends with a **single word** prompting for confirmation from the other speaker.

And that was the last time you worked there, in 2012, **right?** She'd never done that before, **correct?** I'm going to ask you a few questions, **okay?**

Comma Splices

A comma splice refers to a comma that links two or more complete sentences without a conjunction between them. Do **NOT** use comma splices. Punctuate the sentences separately.

No →	This is a comma splice, these should be separate sentences.
Yes → These are separate sentences. Don't join them with just a comma.	

After a Conjunction

Do **NOT** use a comma after a conjunction unless it is required for a dependent clause that follows.

No →	No → So, I decided to get a new job as a professional mime.						
Yes →	Yes → So I decided to get a new job as a professional mime.						
No →	lo → But, I didn't want to overstep my boundaries.						
Yes →	Yes → But I didn't want to overstep my boundaries.						

Either of these are acceptable according to our style:

Yes →	But, although I wanted to go, I didn't want to overstep my boundaries.
Yes →	But although I wanted to go, I didn't want to overstep my boundaries.

Between a Subject and Verb

Never separate the subject from its verb with a comma.

No →	She looked over my proposal, and approved it.	
Yes →	She looked over my proposal and approved it.	

Speaker Pauses

Although people sometimes speak in halting and unusual ways, do **NOT** add commas just because a speaker pauses. You are creating a **written transcript** and whoever reads it may not have the benefit of listening to the audio while they are reading. Commas should follow **standard writing rules** as much as possible.



Quotation Marks

Use quotation marks for direct and hypothetical speech, whether **spoken**, **thought**, or **written**. This can sometimes be a judgment call, so remember that the goal is **readability**. If quotation marks lend clarity to the text, use them.

Punctuate quotes using standard American English conventions, remembering to **capitalize the first word** of the quote. At the end of the quote, punctuate the quoted sentence and then close the quotation marks.

So she said to me, "This is the best coffee shop in the world."

"Why do we have to study math, Mr. Edwards?" the children asked.

In a class for my master's, I had to start every answer with, "My answer is blah, blah, blah."

If the **sentence outside the quote** requires punctuation other than a comma or period, place it outside the quotation marks.

Did you really come all this way just to say, "I lost my pencil"?

If a quote is nested within another, use **single quotation marks** for the inner quote. Remember to close both sets of quotes.

I heard a guy say, "My favorite movie line is, 'Dreams die hard, and you hold them in your hands long after they've turned to dust,' but I can't remember what movie it's from." So I told him, "Dude, it's from Dragonheart. The next part goes, 'I will not be that naive again.'"

Use **quotation marks** if a word or phrase is **quoted exactly** from a document or another speaker.

In this email, it says you were promoted to "senior production quality inspector"; did I read that right? So you say you felt "uncomfortable" in your workplace. Please elaborate on that. What do you mean by, "a document that they signed off on"?

Do **NOT** use quotation marks for indirect quotes.

He told me that he really wanted me to come on this trip.

You said you had nothing to do with it, right?

This document says things about you that aren't very kind; would you agree?

I don't have it in front of me right now, but the email said you and Ruth had a fight in the breakroom?

Do **NOT** use quotation marks if the speaker is **paraphrasing** and changes even one word.

- A In that text, I said, "I want to go shopping tomorrow."
- **Q** So you told Amy you wanted to go shopping tomorrow?



Interrupted Quotes

When a speaker interrupts their quote by inserting additional information before continuing, use commas or single dashes as per our usual rules to offset the interruption. Do **NOT** capitalize the second part of the quoted sentence **unless** each part of the quote is a separate sentence, then start the second quote with a capital letter.

He told me, "I walked all the way out there," which is quite a long walk, I assure you, "to the mall." Then he goes, "But once I got there" - I can't remember how long it took him - "it was already closed."

She told her team, "Let's decide next week," but a minute later, she said, "Actually, let's decide now."

If a quote is interrupted by another speaker, use double dashes **inside** the quotation marks.

So I told him, I says, "I was on my way to the polls--"
As in voting?
"--and I got into a car accident."

Media Titles

Titles of books, movies, et cetera are written as you normally see titles, with capitals for the first and important words, such as **The Lord of the Rings** or **Cooking Light**. Do **NOT** use quotations or other special formatting or styling for titles.

Other Punctuation

Apostrophes

Use apostrophes as per standard English conventions. **Plural** forms of words generally do **NOT** take an apostrophe. Most **possessives** are formed by adding **apostrophe S**, but for **plurals ending in S**, make the possessive by adding **just** an apostrophe.

Yes →	Eight cats	12 TVs	the 1990s
Yes →	My father's house	the TV's antenna	Kansas's state legislature
Yes →	All 12 TVs' antennas	our fathers' houses	the 70s' best fashion

If a **year** is abbreviated, an apostrophe takes the missing digits' place.

It happened in the summer of 19-- or rather, in the fall of '08. I wish I'd been alive in the '70s.

Hyphens

Hyphens are commonly used in transcription when **multiple words** combine to make a **compound adjective**. At TM, we hyphenate compound adjectives **ONLY** when they precede the noun. Never attach a hyphen to the end of a word ending in -ly.

I have a **custom-built computer**. It's custom built because I built it myself. The employee of the month is usually a smartly dressed individual.



Spoken Punctuation

When a speaker **dictates punctuation**, please punctuate as instructed in addition to using standard punctuation throughout the text. In other words, use the punctuation dictated, but don't **limit yourself** to only that punctuation. You should **omit** the spoken punctuation words (comma, period, et cetera).

This style is often used in medical notes or when a document is being read aloud into the legal record.

Said:	Patient presented with a runny nose, comma, sore throat, comma, and red, itchy eyes , stop .	
Туре:	Patient presented with a runny nose, sore throat, and red, itchy eyes.	

Parentheses or Ellipses

We do **NOT** use parentheses or ellipses unless they are necessary for conventional formatting.

Yes →	401(k)	Nebraska read-on Rule 30(b)(8)(A)
Yes →	Wait Wait Don't Tell Me!	Once Upon a Time in Hollywood

Accented Letters

We do **NOT** use special characters or accented letters, as they may cause errors in the system after submission of an answer or transcript. We are aware this sometimes changes the meaning of a word, such as with **si**, but clients acknowledge the system restriction.

No →	Cañon City	fiancée	sí
Yes →	Canon City	fiancee	si

Necessary Punctuation after Double Dashes

Okay. Ms.-- Mr.-- I'm sorry. Mr. Prentiss. Slip of the tongue there. I apologize.

Tips and Reminders

- **Tags** are always **lowercase** within **square brackets** []. After passing your exams, we recommend using the WorkHub editor's Snippet feature to insert all your tags in order to avoid errors.
- **Never paste directly into the WorkHub** from an external text-processing document, web page, et cetera. **All work must be completed online directly in our WorkHub**. If copying from a website, first paste into your browser's **search or address bar** to strip formatting, then copy/paste from there into the Hub.
- **Spell-check** every file with a program such as Grammarly or Word to avoid typos and other errors.
- **Proofread** your work carefully, listen to the audio at least twice, and refer back to the Style Guide frequently!
- Send a **Help Desk ticket** if you ever accidentally submit a file or encounter something unusual such as an entirely silent or foreign audio.
- Always **take notes** on anything you learn via research for transcription work. Once you've joined Legal Phoenix, be **communicative** with your fellow workers! **Share** your research from files you've worked on, like names and terms and dates. Legal transcription involves looking up and verifying a lot of (sometimes obscure) data. You could save someone hours of googling by sharing something you already discovered.