

[Interview Transcription Template – Word \(.docx\)](#)

## Clean verbatim vs. true verbatim transcript examples

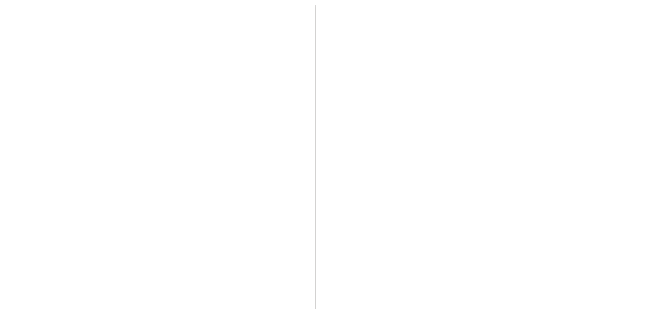
There are two main styles of transcription used in interviews and qualitative research:

1. **Clean verbatim** (also called intelligent verbatim or non-verbatim).
2. **True verbatim** (also called strict verbatim, or simply “verbatim”).

A clean verbatim transcript is a lightly edited version of the original audio. Typically, the following elements are removed:

- Stutters
- Filler speech, including “um,” “uh,” etc.
- Most non-speech sounds, including coughing and throat clearing
- False starts

A true verbatim transcript, on the other hand, attempts to capture every utterance of the speakers. These include stutters, meaningless filler speech, and false starts. Verbatim style may also include non-speech and background sounds, such as coughing and sneezing or a door closing.



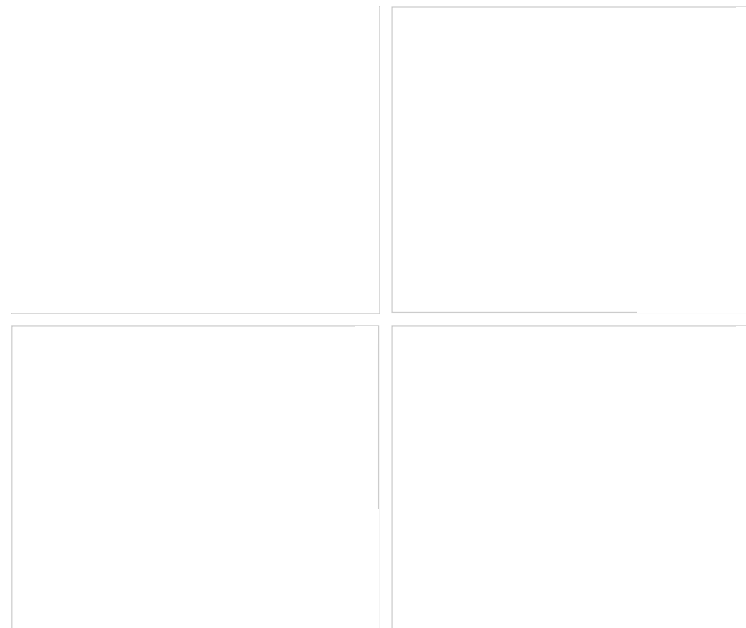
While each transcription style is useful under certain circumstances, clean verbatim is used most often because the transcripts cost less and are easier to read.

However, true verbatim may be desirable for certain qualitative and market research projects and legal investigations, where it's necessary to study not only what was said, but also the manner in which something was said.

Below, I've included examples of an interview transcribed in both verbatim and clean verbatim fashion.

## Example transcript in true verbatim style

Here's a sample interview transcript that demonstrates the true verbatim style:



#### True Verbatim Transcript Example

Steve: Welcome back, Brad. This is the second part of our interview, and I want to get through these as quickly as possible because I know you have somewhere to be, so ...

Brad: Thank you. It's my pleasure.

Steve: It says on the website you worked doing graphic design for a local branding agency before branching out and starting your own business. Was ... was that-

Brad: Yes.

Steve: So was that a conscious choice, or ...?

Brad: Yes. Well, ac-

Steve: Sorry, uh, one sec. Can you, um ... We can hear the fan.

Charlene: [inaudible 00:27]

Steve: N-no, no, that's perfect. Thanks, Charlene. Good.

So, uh, was starting your own company intentional, or did you just sort of fall into it?

Brad: Actually, sort of both. I actually started out doing it as a favor for a friend. He ... I didn't really know what I was doing at the time, but, uh, at some point I found out I was having some success with that, and, um, so I actually started doing it for local businesses and restaurants, and, uh, so then it kind of took off from there, and then I figured, well, if I'm going to be taking on all these new clients I mi-might as well get a website, you know, going, and make something out of this, you know?

Steve: Sure. Sure. So what kind of challenges did you experience when you were starting out, that you weren't expecting?

Brad: Hmm, challenges I wasn't expecting. Uh ...

Steve: [laughs] I keep putting you on the spot. I don't think I put that one in the questions either. We're ... we're just ad-libbing here.

Brad: N-no, it's fine. So, um, challenges ...

Steve: Yeah. It could be, like, funding, or anything. So I forgot to ask you earlier, did you bootstrap?

Brad: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. I had, like, literally, like, \$200 in the bank when I started out. And that's Canadian cur... Canadian dollars, so, that's like, what, uh, two cents US? [laughs] Nah, just kidding. Pretty sad though.

Steve: Oh, really? Was that-

Brad: Yeah. Well, and an AdWords credit, maybe \$50 or \$100 or something like that, but I had no idea what I was doing at the time.

Steve: Right. So where did you get ... I guess, how did you get the word out about your business and what you were doing?

Brad: Uh ... phew. Well, besides the referrals I was getting, I, um ... I actually enlisted my first few clients by this post on Facebook and asking my friend, um ... My one friend, he's got, like, 8,000 Facebook friends and I have, like, two, and one of them's my mom.

Steve: [laughing]

Brad: No, serious, Steve. So, I actually asked this buddy to help me out and put this, like, thing up for me, and he actually went and ... He's [coughs] and he has a lot of friends who do that kind of thing, and so I actually got a few leads out of the deal that I still do work for sometimes, and one of them is actually my biggest client, so yeah.

Steve: Nice. Nice.

Brad: Yeah. Th-then the other thing I did, actually, was sort of local outreach, uh, with local magazines and newspapers and whatnot, and I got a couple of mentions that way that led to my first "real" clients. You know, like ... [clears throat] Not that they weren't real before, but sometimes when they're your friends it kind of feels like they're doing a favor, you know?

And yeah, and I did actually have some luck also with networking and meetup groups and stuff like that – you know, local – but, uh, I'm actually a bit of an introvert, so it took me a while to get around to it. [laughs]

Steve: No way. I don't believe it. Do you have a Twitter?

Brad: Yeah, I have a Twitter. [laughs] "A Twitter." But, uh, I don't think I've ever posted a tweet. I can't even remember my password. I'm too old for that stuff, Steve. I'm pushing 50 next month.

Steve: [laughs]

Brad: Well, Steve, you know what they say. Nothing beats good old-fashioned PR for a local business. I don't know who "they" are.

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## Example transcript in clean verbatim style

And here's the same conversation from above, transcribed in clean verbatim:

#### Clean Verbatim Transcript Example

Steve: Welcome back, Brad. This is the second part of our interview, and I want to get through these as quickly as possible because I know you have somewhere to be.

Brad: Thank you. It's my pleasure.

Steve: It says on the website you worked doing graphic design for a local branding agency before branching out and starting your own business.

Brad: Yes.

Steve: Was that a conscious choice?

Brad: Yes.

Steve: Sorry, one sec. We can hear the fan.

Charlene: [inaudible 00:27]

Steve: No, no, that's perfect. Thanks, Charlene. Good.

Was starting your own company intentional, or did you just sort of fall into it?

Brad: Actually, sort of both. I started out doing it as a favor for a friend. I didn't really know what I was doing at the time, but at some point I found out I was having some success with that, and so I started doing it for local businesses and restaurants.

Then it kind of took off from there, and then I figured, well, if I'm going to be taking on all these new clients I might as well get a website going and make something out of this, you know?

Steve: Sure. What kind of challenges did you experience when you were starting out, that you weren't expecting?

Brad: Hmm, challenges I wasn't expecting.

Steve: [laughs] I keep putting you on the spot. I don't think I put that one in the questions either. We're just ad-libbing here.

Brad: No, it's fine. So, challenges ...

Steve: Yeah. It could be funding or anything. I forgot to ask you earlier, did you bootstrap?

Brad: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. I had literally, like, \$200 in the bank when I started out. And that's Canadian dollars, so that's like, what, two cents US? [laughs] Nah, just kidding. Pretty sad though.

Steve: Oh, really?

Brad: Yeah. Well, and an AdWords credit, maybe \$50 or \$100 or something like that, but I had no idea what I was doing at the time.

Steve: Right. How did you get the word out about your business and what you were doing?

Brad: Uh ... phew. Well, besides the referrals I was getting, I enlisted my first few clients by this post on Facebook and asking my friend ... My one friend, he's got, like, 8,000 Facebook friends and I have, like, two, and one of them's my mom.

Steve: [laughing]

Brad: No, serious, Steve. So, I asked this buddy to help me out and put this thing up for me, and he has a lot of friends who do that kind of thing, so I got a few leads out of the deal that I still do work for sometimes, and one of them is my biggest client, so yeah.

Steve: Nice.

Brad: Yeah. Then the other thing I did was local outreach with local magazines and newspapers and whatnot, and I got a couple of mentions that way that led to my first "real" clients. Not that they weren't real before, but sometimes when they're your friends it kind of feels like they're doing a favor, you know?

I did have some luck also with networking and meetup groups and stuff like that – you know, local – but I'm a bit of an introvert, so it took me a while to get around to it.  
[laughs]

Steve: No way. I don't believe it. Do you have a Twitter?

Brad: Yeah, I have a Twitter. [laughs] "A Twitter." But I don't think I've ever posted a tweet. I can't even remember my password. I'm too old for that stuff, Steve. I'm pushing 50 next month.

Steve: [laughs]

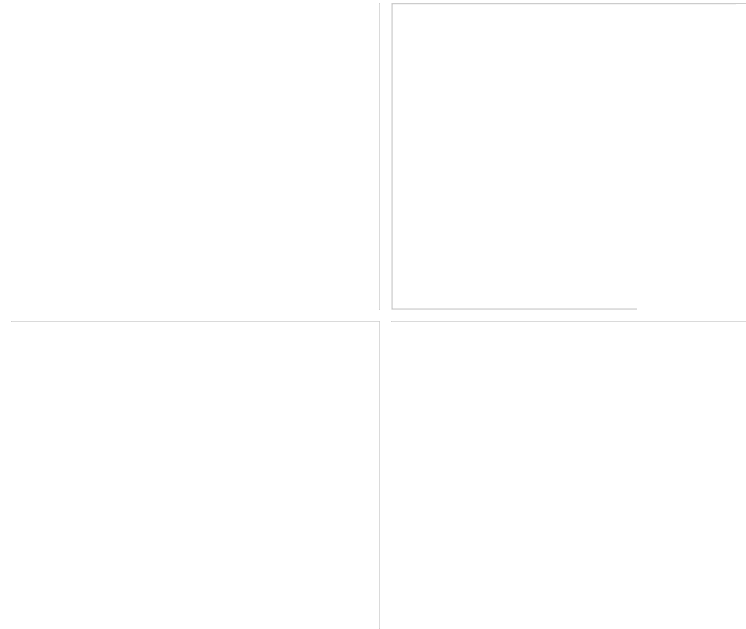
Brad: Well, Steve, you know what they say. Nothing beats good old-fashioned PR for a local business. I don't know who "they" are.

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[Interview Transcript Example – Clean Verbatim \(PDF\)](#)

We made the following changes to the second (clean verbatim) transcript:



- We edited out stutters, partial words, and short incomplete sentences.
- We removed meaningless instances of words like “so” at the start of sentences, and “like” when used as filler speech. (However, we left in the word “like” where removing it would have made the meaning literal when it wasn’t intended to be – i.e., when Brad refers to his “like, two” Facebook friends.)
- We chose to leave in the laughter, as it helps capture the overall tone of the interview and the banter occurring between the speakers. We also left in nonsense exclamations like “Uh ... phew,” because it helps set the context for what follows. However, we removed other non-speech sounds like coughing and throat clearing that do not contribute anything useful to the content.
- In this particular example, we opted to remove repetitive instances of the word “actually” spoken by Brad, the interviewee. Normally we leave longer words in, but in this case we felt it was a speaker idiosyncrasy that distracted from the content of the interview.

Clean verbatim style is not an exact science, and sometimes there may be overlap between non-verbatim and verbatim styles in a transcript. All in all, the changes we made here make for a cleaner, less distracting, and more valuable interview – without detracting anything meaningful from the original.

## Sample transcript with timestamps at regular intervals

Some projects require timestamps to be placed at **regular intervals** in the transcript so the audio can be easily referenced later.

Below is an example of an interview transcript with timestamps:

#### Sample Transcript with Timestamps at Regular Intervals

Steve: Welcome back, Brad. This is the second part of our interview, and I want to get through these as quickly as possible because I know you have somewhere to be.

Brad: Thank you. It's my pleasure.

Steve: It says on the website you worked doing graphic design for a local branding agency before branching out and [00:15] starting your own business.

Brad: Yes.

Steve: Was that a conscious choice?

Brad: Yes.

Steve: Sorry, one sec. We can hear the fan.

Charlene: [inaudible 00:27]

Steve: No, no, that's perfect. Thanks, [00:30] Charlene. Good.

Was starting your own company intentional, or did you just sort of fall into it?

Brad: Actually, sort of both. I started out doing it as a favor for a friend. I didn't really know what I was doing at the time, [00:45] but at some point I found out I was having some success with that, and so I started doing it for local businesses and restaurants.

Then it kind of took off from there, and then I figured, well, if I'm going to be taking on all these new clients I might as well [01:00] get a website going and make something out of this, you know?

Steve: Sure. What kind of challenges did you experience when you were starting out, that you weren't expecting?

Brad: Hmm, challenges I wasn't [01:15] expecting.

Steve: [laughs] I keep putting you on the spot. I don't think I put that one in the questions either. We're just ad-libbing here.

Brad: No, it's fine. So, challenges ...

Steve: Yeah. It could be funding or anything. I forgot to [01:30] ask you earlier, did you bootstrap?



Brad: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. I had literally, like, \$200 in the bank when I started out. And that's Canadian dollars, so that's like, what, two cents US? [laughs] Nah, just kidding. Pretty sad though.

Steve: [01:45] Oh, really?

Brad: Yeah. Well, and an AdWords credit, maybe \$50 or \$100 or something like that, but I had no idea what I was doing at the time.

Steve: Right. [02:00] How did you get the word out about your business and what you were doing?

Brad: Uh ... phew. Well, besides the referrals I was getting, I enlisted my first few clients by this post on Facebook and asking my friend ... My one friend, [02:15] he's got, like, 8,000 Facebook friends and I have, like, two, and one of them's my mom.

Steve: [laughing]

Brad: No, serious, Steve. So, I asked this buddy to help me out and put this thing up for me, and he has a lot of [02:30] friends who do that kind of thing, so I got a few leads out of the deal that I still do work for sometimes, and one of them is my biggest client, so yeah.

Steve: Nice.

Brad: Yeah. Then the other thing I did was local outreach with local [02:45] magazines and newspapers and whatnot, and I got a couple of mentions that way that led to my first "real" clients. Not that they weren't real before, but sometimes when they're your friends it kind of feels like they're doing a favor, you know?

[03:00] I did have some luck also with networking and meetup groups and stuff like that – you know, local – but I'm a bit of an introvert, so it took me a while to get around to it. [laughs]

Steve: No way. I don't believe it. Do you have a Twitter?

Brad: [03:15] Yeah, I have a Twitter. [laughs] "A Twitter." But I don't think I've ever posted a tweet. I can't even remember my password. I'm too old for that stuff, Steve. I'm pushing 50 next month.

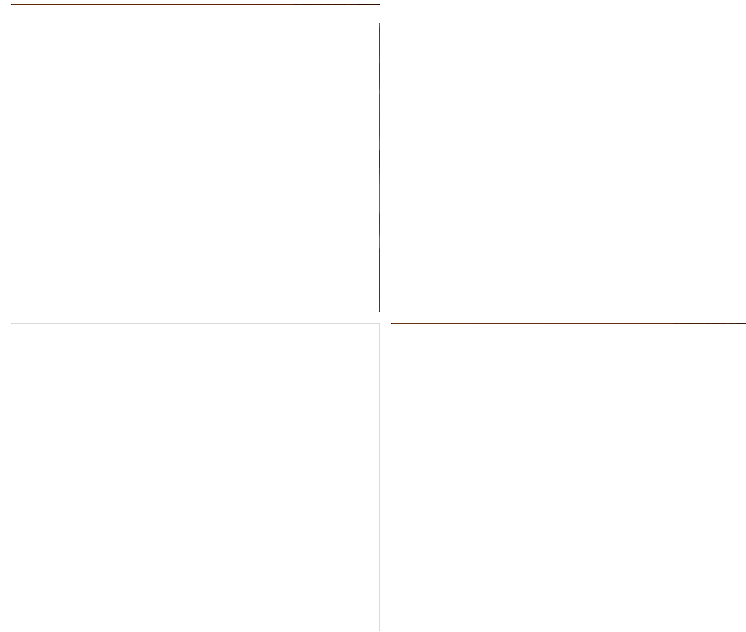
Steve: [laughs]

Brad: Well, Steve, you know what they [03:30] say. Nothing beats good old-fashioned PR for a local business. I don't know who "they" are.

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## Sample transcript with timestamps at speaker intervals

Another way to timestamp a document is to place the timecode markup at **speaker or paragraph intervals**, like in the following interview transcript sample:

#### Sample Transcript with Timestamps at Speaker Intervals

[00:01] Steve: Welcome back, Brad. This is the second part of our interview, and I want to get through these as quickly as possible because I know you have somewhere to be.

[00:08] Brad: Thank you. It's my pleasure.

[00:09] Steve: It says on the website you worked doing graphic design for a local branding agency before branching out and starting your own business.

[00:18] Brad: Yes.

[00:19] Steve: Was that a conscious choice?

[00:21] Brad: Yes.

[00:24] Steve: Sorry, one sec. We can hear the fan.

[00:27] Charlene:

[inaudible 00:27]

[00:28] Steve: No, no, that's perfect. Thanks, Charlene. Good.

Was starting your own company intentional, or did you just sort of fall into it?

[00:37] Brad: Actually, sort of both. I started out doing it as a favor for a friend. I didn't really know what I was doing at the time, but at some point I found out I was having some success with that, and so I started doing it for local businesses and restaurants.

Then it kind of took off from there, and then I figured, well, if I'm going to be taking on all these new clients I might as well get a website going and make something out of this, you know?

[01:07] Steve: Sure. What kind of challenges did you experience when you were starting out, that you weren't expecting?

[01:13] Brad: Hmm, challenges I wasn't expecting.

[01:17] Steve: [laughs] I keep putting you on the spot. I don't think I put that one in the questions either. We're just ad-libbing here.

[01:24] Brad: No, it's fine. So, challenges ...

[01:27] Steve: Yeah. It could be funding or anything. I forgot to ask you earlier, did you bootstrap?

[01:33] Brad: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. I had literally, like, \$200 in the bank when I started out. And that's Canadian dollars, so that's like, what, two cents US? [laughs] Nah, just kidding. Pretty sad though.

[01:46] Steve: Oh, really?

[01:48] Brad: Yeah. Well, and an AdWords credit, maybe \$50 or \$100 or something like that, but I had no idea what I was doing at the time.

[01:58] Steve: Right. How did you get the word out about your business and what you were doing?

[02:05] Brad: Uh ... phew. Well, besides the referrals I was getting, I enlisted my first few clients by this post on Facebook and asking my friend ... My one friend, he's got, like, 8,000 Facebook friends and I have, like, two, and one of them's my mom.

[02:20] Steve: [laughing]

[02:21] Brad: No, serious, Steve. So, I asked this buddy to help me out and put this thing up for me, and he has a lot of friends who do that kind of thing, so I got a few leads out of the deal that I still do work for sometimes, and one of them is my biggest client, so yeah.

[02:39] Steve: Nice.

[02:40] Brad: Yeah. Then the other thing I did was local outreach with local magazines and newspapers and whatnot, and I got a couple of mentions that way that led to my first "real" clients. Not that they weren't real before, but sometimes when they're your friends it kind of feels like they're doing a favor, you know?

I did have some luck also with networking and meetup groups and stuff like that – you know, local – but I'm a bit of an introvert, so it took me a while to get around to it.  
[laughs]

[03:11] Steve: No way. I don't believe it. Do you have a Twitter?

[03:16] Brad: Yeah, I have a Twitter. [laughs] "A Twitter." But I don't think I've ever posted a tweet. I can't even remember my password. I'm too old for that stuff, Steve. I'm pushing 50 next month.

[03:27] Steve: [laughs]

[03:29] Brad: Well, Steve, you know what they say. Nothing beats good old-fashioned PR for a local business. I don't know who "they" are.

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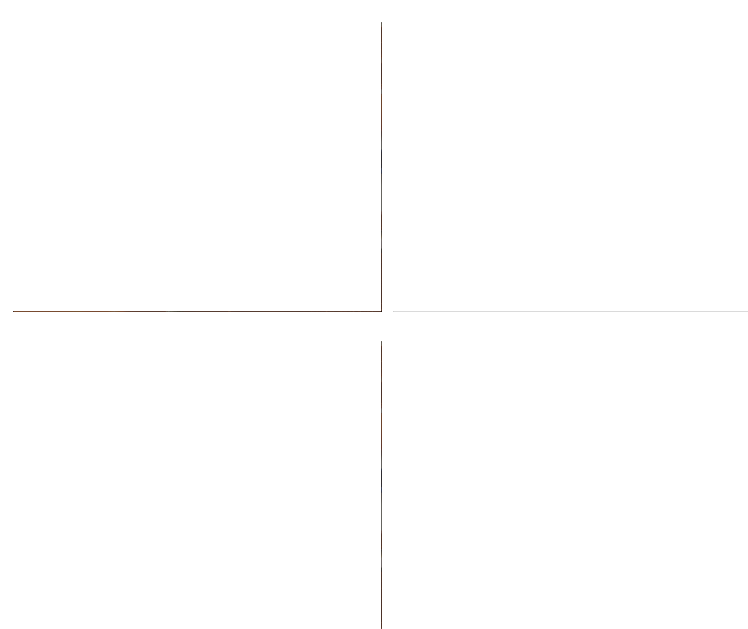
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## Transcript format tips

There are several formatting elements common to most transcripts. These include speaker labels, timestamps, inaudible and crosstalk tags, and markup for external sounds. Let's look at how to handle each of these:

**Speaker labels.** Speakers are typically identified by first name, full name, title, or role. They can also be identified by generic descriptors, like "Male" or "Female," when other information isn't available.



In the above examples, the speakers' names have been offset from the rest of the transcript for better readability. To use this formatting in your own transcripts, download the .docx template at the top of this article.

**Timestamps.** Timestamps, e.g. *[01:27]*, can be placed at regular intervals such as every 15 or 30 seconds, or they may be placed at the beginning or end of each paragraph or speaker. Examples of each style are shown above.

**Inaudible tags.** When words or phrases are unclear, mark them out with a timecode; e.g., *[inaudible 00:27]*. You can also include guesses (phonetic or otherwise) as to what was said – for example, *[wing yard 00:27]*.

**Crosstalk tags.** When two or more speakers are talking at the same time and it's impossible to hear what's being said, use a crosstalk tag, e.g. *[crosstalk 01:27]*.