As already mentioned, a good wind gag is a vital microphone accessory for most fieldwork. This is not the same thing as the piece of foam surrounding the device itself that was probably supplied with the microphone. Such foam sleeves do help in controlled conditions, but they are not adequate for outdoor use. A suitable wind gag will resemble a piece of fur (one nickname for larger gags is 'dead cat') and is generally intended to be used over the supplied foam cover not instead of it.[15] Commercial wind gags are generally
p. 26 superior to homemade ones because ↳ they employ 'acoustically transparent' materials to avoid an overall loss of sound.[16] Most designs are intended for large stand-alone microphones, but there are also models available for lapel types and even for entire camcorders (to shield their internal microphones). Note that no wind gag can be totally effective against strong wind conditions. However, paying attention to the orientation and placement of the microphone (i.e. so that it is shielded from the wind even if the object of the recording is not) can mitigate the problem.

Recording individual speakers.

Almost any kind of good quality microphone can be effective when recording just one speaker; the choice becomes more critical when recording a group, as discussed in the next section. Nevertheless we have developed a strong preference: our best recording experiences when recording individual speakers have been with lapel (also called tie-clip or lavalier) microphones ('Sony ECM-C115/C10') and in particular with radio lapel microphones ('Sony UWP-C1'). In this arrangement (supplied as a package), a lapel microphone is connected by a short cable to a transmitter, and both components are with the speaker. The transmitter can be clipped to a belt, put into a pocket, or simply placed next to the speaker. The third part of the setup is the receiver which is plugged into the recorder as any other microphone would be. The advantages of radio microphones become obvious whenever there has to be some distance between the recorder and the speaker, for example with video recordings.

For one thing, there is no cable between the speaker and the camera over which people may stumble.[17] Cables are always a problem, but especially for systems without balanced connectors (i.e. many microphones and most MP3 recorders, and consumer and prosumer video cameras) for which long runs constitute acoustic hazards as mentioned earlier. Even more importantly, radio microphones allow the speaker to move around freely. This allows a craftsman, gardener, or performer to go about their business while being filmed. We also have good experience with radio microphones for running commentaries. We come back to this in the section on commentaries below.

Radio microphones are quite likely to have professional type connectors such as XLR. In order to use such a microphone on a more basic recorder, some kind of adaptor might be required. This might be either a simple
p. 27 converter lead or a more sophisticated unit providing signal level control, etc. (e.g. 'BeachTek DXA-2S'). The ↳ latter option is preferred if the recorder lacks such controls, though it is rather expensive.

Radio microphones need not be of the lapel type; they can also be handheld, which can work well for an experienced performer (e.g. a singer or orator). However. for the naïve user (like most of us) a lapel microphone that can be fastened to the clothes near the mouth, and then forgotten, probably works better. (But it requires that people wear some kind of shirt or top to which the microphone can be attached.) We recommend that all lapel microphones—wired or wireless—should be of the omnidirectional type. Unidirectional lapel microphones will, in theory, isolate the speaker's voice from the background better, but if the relation between the mouth and the microphone should change (through slipping or turning of the head) the recording quality will be very poor.

A variation on the lapel microphone is the headset microphone (the 'Voice Technologies VT700' omnidirectional has been highly recommended by a colleague). In this configuration a very small microphone is suspended in front of the mouth by the headset. This arrangement probably gives even better