Transcription General Style Guide

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Introduction

This style guide is for transcribers and QAs to use in their work at TranscribeMe and discusses general guidelines, punctuation and grammar, proper tag usage, and style of transcription. This style guide is not intended to be an exhaustive or complete guide to English grammar and syntax, as the rules outlined here have been implemented to meet the particular demands of transcription for TranscribeMe.

Why TranscribeMe is Unique

You will be doing transcription for TranscribeMe using our award-winning platform. TranscribeMe approaches transcription very differently than other companies. Instead of transcribing one complete audio file, you will be working on what we call short microtasks/chunks. These are short audio clips of one to two minutes (sometimes longer - sometimes shorter).

These chunks are put into a queue and available to transcribers randomly. The chunks you are working on can come from several different files at once.

Since we are so unique, this means that our style, and some of the style rules we have in place, will be vastly different from other companies you might have worked. It is very important to always check the style guide of each chunk you transcribe. Different chunks can often have different styles.

TranscribeMe Style

No Timestamps, No Speaker IDs

Since you are transcribing short audio files on the **Jobs** tab that are randomly queued, *never* insert any type of speaker ID or timestamp.

No Capital, No Punctuation

When you log in to the TranscribeMe WorkHub and click on the **Jobs** tab, you will receive a chunk of audio to transcribe. Since this is not the complete file, the audio is likely to pick up and leave off in the middle of a sentence.

For that reason, please DO NOT start your chunk of audio with a capital letter (unless it is a proper noun) or end with any sort of punctuation. This includes any type of punctuation: period, comma, ellipses, double or single dash etc.

In some cases, the QA may have to insert a capital letter at the beginning of your chunk or a punctuation mark at the end in order to join your chunk correctly with the other small chunks around yours. These changes are not considered errors, even though you will see them in your work history.

Spacing

At TranscribeMe we only use one space after a full stop. So you would only insert one space after a sentence.

Each Speaker on a New Line

Please put each new speaker on a new line of the transcript. Pressing the carriage return one time is sufficient.

No Extra Spaces

After you submit your chunk on the Jobs tab, a space will automatically be added where it is joined to the other chunks of the audio completed by other transcribers. For that reason, please DO NOT start or end your chunk with a space or any extra whitespace. In other words, please don't hit the spacebar or the Enter key at the end of your file before submitting it.

British vs US English

American spelling and punctuation is the default at TranscribeMe, regardless of the spoken accent. However, for each new job, please look at the guidelines that appear on the right-hand side, as we do sometimes receive files that request British English spellings. These will be marked on the right with British (BE), Aussie (UE), Kiwi (KE), Scottish (SE), or Irish (IE).

To unlock these special files using British English, please check out the accent exams on your Exams tab.

Sample Transcript

Here is a correct (albeit short) sample transcript showing the above principles in action:
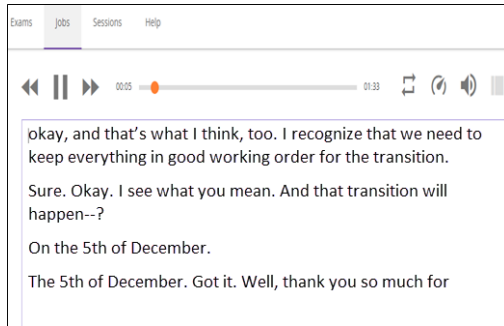
Clean Verbatim

Clean verbatim is an approach to transcribing which ensures that the transcription is clear, succinct, and easy to read, while at the same time preserves essential information and meaning.

We want to accurately represent everything that is said in the audio. However, for our clean verbatim product, we do want to *clean up* their speech to make it easier to read. We just don't want to *edit* their speech. The most common features of speech altered by clean verbatim are stutters and stammers, filler words and crutch words. This section will lay out specifically how to transcribe your audio chunk using TranscribeMe Clean Verbatim.

Stutters and Stammers

The most obvious things we remove for a clean verbatim transcript are repeated sounds when the speaker stutters or stammers.

➢ Incorrect: Re-re-repeated s-s-sounds should be left out of the transcript. This includes par-- when the speaker starts one word and then changes their mind or says, says the same word twice.

✓ Repeated sounds should be left out of the transcript. This includes when the speaker starts one word and then changes their mind or says the same word twice.

Sometimes, the speaker will repeat a word on purpose, to add emphasis. These repetitions should be left in.

✓ It is very, very important to pay attention to the reason for the repetition.

Filler Words

Filler words and sounds, such as *um*, *uh*, or *ah*, should always be left out of the transcript. This also includes words like *mm-hmm* or *nuh-uh*, unless it is the **only** answer given to a direct question.

> Did you go to the store?
> Mm-hmm. I went and bought milk. *(Mm-hmm is not transcribed because there are words said after)*
> Is that all you bought?
> Mm-hmm.
> Oh, okay. Thanks.

When transcribing the **only** answer to a direct question, please use these spellings for consistency:

Affirmative: *uh-huh, mm-hmm.*
Negative: *uh-uh, hmm-mm, mm-mm, huh-uh, nuh-uh.*

Note that conjunctions and interjections should still be included.

And I wanted to get a new dog, but.
Ouch. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I see what you mean.
I know, right? It was like, "This dog won't work, so yeah."
Wow. That is crazy.
Oh, and you know what else?

Crutch Words

The only crutch words that we remove are *like* and *you know*.

- <s>Like</s>, if the speaker, <s>like</s>, talks like this, then, <s>you know</s>, remove the crutch words.

Please note that we *only* remove these words when they are used as a crutch and add no meaning to the sentence.

- If the speaker talks like this, then there are no crutch words to remove.
- He was like, "What do you think?"
- She was gone for like a week.
- Do you know what time it is?

If another speaker answers the "you know?" question, then it can be left in.

And that's when the bear growls at you, and you're like, "OMG," you know?
Yeah, I know exactly what you mean.

False Starts

Speakers will commonly make mistakes or change the direction of their thoughts, which can prompt them to begin a phrase or sentence over. This is referred to as a false start.

At TranscribeMe, false starts are marked with a double dash, followed by a lowercase letter. You can insert a double dash by striking the hyphen key twice, and it should look like this [--]. The double dash should come immediately (without a gap) after the word where the speaker breaks away to start again. There is a space *after* the double dash, but not *before* it. Unless the next word is a proper noun, we always use a lowercase letter after a false start, even if what follows is a complete sentence on its own.

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

Please note that not all false starts or mistakes should be marked this way. If the speaker corrects him or herself quickly, three or fewer words into a false start, then it will not be necessary to transcribe the false start verbatim. Instead, omit the error, and transcribe the correct sentence without the false start.

Incorrect:	Correct:
I went to <s>the mall</s> the store, and I bought some milk there.	I went to the store, and I bought some milk there.

The first three words (I went to) are part of the corrected sentence, so they are not counted in the false start. The false start is only the part that the speaker went back and replaced (the mall). This two-word false start is short enough to be omitted.

If the speaker gets out four or more complete words within the false start, then please leave it in the transcript.

> Here is an example of-- here is a case-- right here, I'm using-- this is a lot of false starts in a row.

Interruptions

Sometimes, especially if the audio file you are transcribing is an interview, speakers may interrupt or even talk over each other.

Like false starts, interruptions are marked with a double dash immediately (without a gap) following the word at which the speaker is interrupted by another speaker. Unlike false starts, though, we do start a new sentence with a capital letter for the new speaker.

> When I was working at my last company, I would--
> What company did you work at?

If the speaker continues the same sentence after being interrupted, essentially picking up where they left off, then please use another double dash on the new line, followed by a lowercase letter with no break.

> Now I am going to tell you--
> Wait a minute.
> --what I think about the company. Oh, wait? Okay. Go ahead.

If the speaker is interrupted while asking a question, insert a question mark immediately after the double dash.

> How long have you been working at your current--?
> About two years.

However, if the speaker continues the same question after the interruption, then there is no need for this question mark, since it will be placed at the end of the completed question.

> How long have you been working--
> About two years.
> --at your current job? Oh, two years. Okay.

Feedback Words

People often make sounds (like *mm-hmm*) or say words (like *yeah*, *right*, or *okay*) while someone else is speaking, with the sole purpose of letting the speaker know they are still listening. At TranscribeMe, we call these feedback words, and we leave them out of the transcript.

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Incorrect:	Correct:
So I went all the way to the mall-- ~~Right. Okay.~~ --and I found a new job. ~~Great.~~ I'm working at one of the kiosks. Okay. Great. Yeah, and which kiosk did you pick?	So I went all the way to the mall, and I found a new job. I'm working at one of the kiosks. Okay. Great. Yeah, and which kiosk did you pick?

Note that we still do include these same words when they are leading in to another speaker's statement. We also do still include longer phrases that add meaning as well as acknowledging the speaker's statements.

> ✓ So that's pretty much the plan we've established.
> Sounds great.
> And now we can get started.

Informal Speech

Transcription commonly deals with informal, accented, and sometimes just plain incorrect patterns of speech. Below are some key tips for how to deal with different types of speech.

- Incorrect grammar should be left as spoken.
  - ✓ I don't think nobody wins all the time, okay, but you done real good.
- Contractions should be left as spoken.
  - ✓ I can't imagine why they didn't want us to join them, right? We are awesome.
- Informal truncations should be corrected to the proper spelling.
  - ➢ Incorrect: I'm gonna wanna go 'cause it's kinda awesome.
  - ✓ Correct: I'm going to want to go because it's kind of awesome.
- Regional or foreign accents should be ignored.
  - ➢ Incorrect: Pacifically, I'm gonn' go ta that there stoar and all 'em stores where they be sellin' milk.
  - ✓ Correct: Specifically, I'm going to go to that there store and all them stores where they be selling milk.
- Regional slang words, however, can be included, using the spellings approved by Merriam-Webster.
  - o Gotcha. Y'all ain't going to believe this.

Extraneous Information

Sometimes, there is speech in the file that seems extraneous. For example, the speaker might say, "Don't transcribe that," or someone conducting a phone interview might mute their device and start talking to someone else in the background. At TranscribeMe, we include all the speech we can hear, even if we don't think it's relevant to the main file.

The only exception to this rule is, we can ignore the TV or radio if it is playing in the background, as well as small snippets of background conversations that do not involve any of the main speakers in the file.

However, even faint background voices should be transcribed if they are interacting with any of the primary speakers.

Tags

In transcription, you will often encounter non-verbal human sounds, inaudible speech, and crowd noise. These are often important to capture because they add meaning to the transcription. The following is a complete list of the tags used at TranscribeMe. Please do not use any tags not included in this list. The use of a tag not listed will result in a rejection.

Tags should be written in lowercase letters at all times, with the exception of the [guess?] tag, which takes the text of your guess, including any capital letters.

[inaudible]

This tag indicates that you could not understand one or more words that the speaker said. It could be a difficult accent, poor audio quality, a background noise like a cough obscuring the words, or even a word that you couldn't find through research.

> ✓ [inaudible] is the best [inaudible] I've ever heard of.

Please note that you are expected to use all reasonable means to determine the correct words before resorting to this tag. For example, if there is a cough on the audio, but you can understand the speaker anyway, then you would include the words said and NOT use this tag. Similarly, if you are able to find the correct terms through research or by playing the audio back at a slower speed, then please do so.

[guess?]

If you are not sure what the words are, but you are able to make a reasonable guess that would fit the context of the file, then you can put your guess into brackets with a question mark.

> ✓ She went to visit [San Juan Islands?] for spring break.

Remember that context can be very helpful with difficult-to-understand audio. For example, if you hear, "Funs of people will be there," listen to the audio again and ask yourself what makes sense. "Tons of people will be there."

Important: Unlike the other tags listed in this section, you are expected to **_modify_** the text inside the [guess?] tag to reflect your actual guess.

> ➢ Incorrect: I want to transcribe [guess?] some files.
> ✓ Correct: I want to [transcribe?] some files.

[crosstalk]

If you are unable to understand the speaker because of someone else talking over them, then please use the [crosstalk] tag instead of [inaudible]. Note: this is _only_ if you can't understand the words. If two speakers are talking over one another but you can understand one or both, then please include the actual words spoken instead of using the [crosstalk] tag. The [crosstalk] tag should only be used to stand in for any words that you can't make out.

> ✓ Did you get the papers and the [crosstalk]?

Yeah, [crosstalk] the papers, definitely.

[foreign]

If you encounter any language other than English in your transcription, please use the [foreign] tag in place of the word or words.

- ✓ He looked at me, and he goes, "[foreign]." And I was like, "I don't speak Latin, dude."

In the case of an English speaker using a very common word or phrase as part of English speech, you can write it out. Examples include words borrowed from other languages like *crepes* or *tortillas*, as well as phrases common in pop culture such as *aloha* or *hasta la vista, baby*.

[laughter]

This is used to mark the point in the transcript where laughter occurs. Please note that this tag is placed inside of any punctuation at the point the laughter occurs, regardless of which speaker is laughing. It should never go at the beginning of a sentence or line.

- ✓ And then I said, "To get to the other side [laughter]." Oh, that's hilarious.
- ➤ Incorrect: [laughter] Oh, that's hilarious.

Sometimes there are small laughs scattered throughout a conversation. It is not necessary to capture every single instance in these cases, as long as the general mood is captured.

[music]

This tag is used to note music that is meant to be in the recording, such as the introductory theme music to a podcast. When there is simply music playing in the background, you can ignore it and not use the tag. The [music] tag should be placed *outside* of any punctuation.

- ✓ [music] Hello, and welcome to the show.
  Now let's hear the latest song from new artist, Down the Road. [music]

[applause]

If there is applause included in the recording, please use this tag. Like [music], the [applause] tag goes outside of punctuation.

[silence]

If there is no human speech, music, or applause for a period of more than ten seconds, then use the [silence] tag.

- ✓ Okay, class, you may begin the exam.
  [silence]
  And pencils down, everybody.

Made-up Words and Other Noises

Non-verbal human sounds - coughs, sneezes, clicking tongues, etc. - should be ignored. We transcribe speech, and we use the tags specifically mentioned above. That's it. We also ignore thinking sounds.

- ✓ Correct: I want a pizza.

> ➢ Incorrect: I want a, buh, buh, buh, buh, buh, pizza.

However, non-standard words that have meaning in the sentence can be included according to what the speaker actually says. Please check Google and use the most common spelling you can find.

> ✓ Then you go over there and do the same steps, da, da, and then da. That's all it is.

Similarly, if the speaker clearly uses a word that does not exist (e.g. brung), please use the most standard spelling that you can find to reflect the speaker's intent. If you are uncertain, the [guess?] tag can be of use. Ultimately, we want to avoid using [inaudible] in the transcript unless we truly can't hear or understand what the speaker is trying to say.

Tag Placement

The first four tags listed here ([inaudible], [guess?], [crosstalk], and [foreign]) take the place of speech that cannot be transcribed. As such, they should always be placed inside of punctuation and on the correct speaker's line, exactly as the missing text would have been.

The [laughter] tag does not take the place of text, but instead marks the spot where the laughter occurs. It also belongs inside of all punctuation, but does not need to match up to the speaker doing the laughing. The [laughter] tag should never appear at the start of a new line or on a line of its own, but in the middle or at the end of the sentence that caused the laughter.

As stated above, [music] and [applause] go outside of punctuation, and [silence] on its own line.
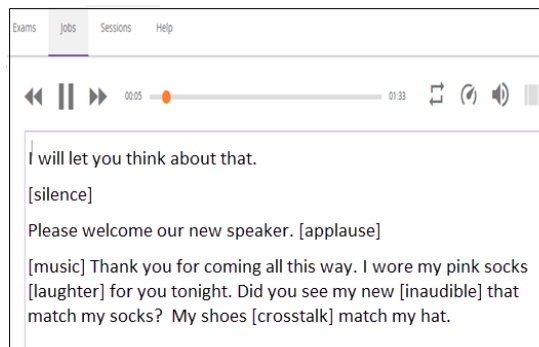
Grammar, Spelling, and Punctuation

This style guide is not intended to be an exhaustive or complete guide to English grammar and syntax. You are expected to research appropriate grammar and spelling on your own. However, what follows may be helpful for situations specific to transcription and to prevent some common mistakes. Do not get focused in so much on punctuation that you mishear a word.

Specific Spelling Rules

In general, we follow the spelling used in the Merriam-Webster dictionary. Please note the following special spellings to use.

- **Okay** (NOT ok or 'kay)

- **All right** (NOT alright)
- **A lot** (NOT alot)
- **etc.** (NOT et cetera).
- **US or USA** (NOT U.S. or U.S.A.)

- **email** (NOT e-mail)
- **Internet** (NOT internet)

Run-on Sentences

Whenever possible, please break up long-winded or run-on sentences into several full sentences. In doing this, it is okay to start a sentence with a conjunction.

> ✓ Long run-on sentences, as well as sentence fragments, should be avoided in transcription whenever possible. But since we have to accurately portray what the speaker says, sometimes we are not able to control the length of the sentences and simply have to write out everything that the speaker takes the time to say. However, when you see an opportunity to break up a long sentence, take it.

Sentence Fragments

Please do not break up long sentences by separating a dependent clause on its own. Dependent clauses are marked by words like *because*, *although*, or *whenever*.

Incorrect:	Correct:
I really like long sentences. Although they can be tough to transcribe.	I really like long sentences, although they can be tough to transcribe.

Even if the speaker pauses between clauses, we want to use proper grammar in transcription, **if** we can do so without changing the actual words spoken.

Commas and Conjunctions

A common mistake in transcription involves when and whether to use a comma with a conjunction. Here are a few quick guidelines to prevent these common errors:

- Never use a comma after a conjunction (unless it is required for the phrase that follows).
  - ➢ Incorrect: I wanted to get a new job. But, I didn't know how.
  - ✓ Correct: I wanted to get a new job. But I didn't know how.
- But other words attached at the front or back of your sentence often do take a comma.
  - ✓ Well, I thought about it.
  - ✓ Fortunately, he really liked my idea.
- Use a comma before a conjunction between two complete sentences.
  - ✓ She looked over my proposal, and she approved of the whole thing.

Note: This comma can be omitted for very short sentences of 5-10 words total.

✓ She looked over my proposal and she approved it.
- But never separate the subject and verb from each other by a comma.
  - ➢ Incorrect: She looked over my proposal, and approved it.
  - ✓ Correct: She looked over my proposal and approved it.
- At TranscribeMe, we do use the Oxford comma. This is the comma before the conjunction in a list of three or more items.
  - ✓ I went to the store for apples, bananas, and coffee.
  - ✓ Did you also get coke, and tea, and a pumpkin?

Comma Splices

If two or more complete sentences are joined together *without* the use of a conjunction, you have a comma splice. Do not use comma splices at TranscribeMe. They should be separate sentences.

➢ Incorrect: This is a comma splice, these should be separate sentences.
✓ Correct: These are separate sentences. Don't join them with just a comma.

Hyphens

The hyphen [-] is most commonly used to form compound words and to link prefixes to other words. Identifying compound words is important because failing to do so may alter the meaning of a sentence, so it is important to get compound words right. Richard Lederer offers the following example to this end:

➢ Father to be stabbed to death in bar
✓ Father-to-be stabbed to death in bar

The two previous sentences have two different meanings based on the omission or inclusion of hyphens. In compound words, the hyphen shows that the words, when linked together, have a combined meaning. The main type of compound word you will encounter in transcription that needs to be hyphenated is the **compound adjective**.

A compound adjective is when multiple words join together to make an adjective. These are hyphenated only when they directly precede the noun.

✓ I have a custom-built computer. It is custom built because I built it myself.

Plurals and Possessives

Many people have trouble with when to use an apostrophe with an S. Here is a quick run-down of the guidelines:

- When you have several of something, there should be no apostrophe.

  Many people like to drink **cokes**.
  How many **Qs** are in that sentence?
  We have 35 **TVs** in our house.
  The **1990s** were a strange time.
- When you want to show ownership, use an apostrophe.

  It was my **father's** house.
  Odysseus's story is an interesting one.

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My **TV's** antenna is broken.

- When showing ownership of a group of things or people, put the apostrophe after the S.

  Both of our **fathers'** birthdays are today.
  All 35 of my **TVs'** antennas are broken.

- But only if the plural ends with an S already.

  Do you know those people's names?
  Everyone's new TVs have arrived.

Colons and Semicolons

The colon and the semicolon can be useful in formal writing. However, they should be used very **sparingly** in transcriptions. Please only use the marks in these specific instances:

- Use a colon only when you have a **complete sentence** introducing a list.
  - ✓ I will need very few supplies for school: pens, paper, and highlighters.
- Use a semicolon (instead of a comma splice) to join two closely related sentences without a conjunction.
  - ✓ I don't like ice cream; I prefer cake.
- In a list with very complex items, you can "promote" the top level of commas to semicolons for clarity.
  - ✓ 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.

Ellipses

Like colons and semi-colons, we avoid ellipses when possible. Specifically, please do NOT use ellipses in the middle of a sentence to indicate that the speaker paused, regardless of the length of that pause.

- ➤ Incorrect: I think I want… that one.
- ✓ Correct: I think I want that one.

The only time we use ellipses is to mark an incomplete sentence (never finished), followed by at least three seconds of silence. (This is really rare and 99.9% of the time a double dash can be used)

- ✓ I think I want… So yeah, please go get me one of those.

If the silence is shorter than three seconds, then please mark the change of thought with a double dash instead.

- ✓ I think I want-- so yeah, please go get me one of those.

When an incomplete question is used to elicit a response, and the response comes after a pause of at least three seconds, then we use an ellipsis followed by a question mark.

- ✓ Do you want to grab one of those, or…?
  Yeah, I'll grab one of those.

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Again, if the pause is less than three seconds long, we would use a double dash instead.

> ✓ Do you want to grab one of those, or--?
> Yeah, I'll grab one of those.

Quotations

At TranscribeMe, quotation marks are used only to quote actual or hypothetical speech by a person or group.

> He said, "I hope things are going well for you."
> They asked us, "How many people do you think will be joining?"
> She was planning to tell the committee, "I recommend that we postpone this decision until next Wednesday."
> The children would be like, "Why do we have to study math, Mr. Edwards?"
> In a class for my master's, I had to start every answer with, "My answer is, blah, blah, blah."

Note in the examples above that we use a comma, space, quotation mark, and then a capital letter. At the end of the quote, we punctuate the quoted sentence and then close the quotation marks.

If the quote is broken up by other words in the sentence, then we would use commas to offset the interruption, and we would not capitalize the second part of the quoted sentence.

> ✓ Then he goes, "I walked all the way out there," he said, "to the mall."

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

> ✓ So he told me, he said, "I was on my way to the polls--"
> As in voting?
> "--and I got into a car accident."

If the overall sentence has punctuation (other than commas and periods) that are not part of the quote, then please place them outside of the quotation marks.

> ✓ Did you really come all this way just to say, "Thank you"?

Please avoid using quotation marks for indirect quotes, where the speaker is giving the content of the quote but not the exact words.

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

If quotes are nested within one another, then please alternate between double and single quotes for each level.

> ✓ I went over to John and was like, "Hey, I know that you were talking about me, going, 'She doesn't know what she's talking about.'"

Finally, all titles, books, movies, and so on are written as you normally see titles, such as The Lord of the Rings or The Wall Street Journal or Cooking Light. Please do not use quotations.

Dashes

In most cases, we prefer to use commas instead of dashes to offset additional information in a sentence.

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

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✓ Things have changed a lot in the last year, mainly for the better.

However, in cases where an entire sentence is inserted into the middle of another one, we use single dashes to show the separation.

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

Note that you can remove the part between the dashes, and the sentence will still make sense. If part of the sentence is repeated after the interjection, then it may be more appropriate to use a double dash indicating a false start.

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

We can also use single dashes to separate a list from the surrounding sentence, but again, only if the sentence would still make sense after removing the list.

✓ 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.

Special Cases

No style guide can cover every possible case. However, this section will cover some of the more common style questions that arise during transcription.

Spelling Words Out

When the speaker spells a name or word, please use capital letters separated by hyphens with no spaces.

✓ My last name is Mehlhaff, M-E-H-L-H-A-F-F.

Similarly, when a single letter is mentioned on its own, please use a capital for that letter.

✓ The next letter after J is obviously K.

Email Addresses

In general, a web or email address can be written out just as it is spoken.

✓ If you're having trouble, please email training@transcribeme.com for help.

However, this can get tricky when the speaker also spells out parts of the address.

✓ Email me at name, that's N-A, M as in Mommy, E, @gmail.com.

Established Names and Terms

Official company names and commonly used spellings may be used, even when they do not directly follow the guidelines here.

- **NBA** (NOT N-B-A)

- **7-Eleven** store
- **iPad**
- **adidas** (NOT Adidas)

In the case of company names, please be sure to go by the name in written form, not the visual logo, as those are often stylized.

Spoken Punctuation

When the speaker dictates punctuation, please use the actual punctuation given, in addition to the standard punctuation we would use throughout the sentences. In other words, use the punctuation spoken, but don't limit yourself to only that punctuation.

> ➢ Incorrect: She was quote unquote friendly to me, and I wanted to respect that, full stop.
> ✓ Correct: She was "friendly" to me, and I wanted to respect that.

Numbers

Numbers zero through nine are spelled out. Numbers 10 and above, please use numerals. The exception to this would be if there are numbers 9 or below and 10 or above in one sentence. In this case, please use all numerals (see **Exceptions for Consistency** below). The number rule also has exceptions depending on what type of number you are transcribing.

Start of a sentence

Always follow the number rule for numbers at the start of a sentence.

- 17 years ago, we experienced the Y2K craze.

Abbreviations and symbols

If an abbreviation or a symbol is used for the unit of measure, the quantity is always expressed by a numeral. The symbols we use are further described below. Symbols not mentioned herein should not be used.

- $5, £9, €15
- 3%
- 6'2 (said: six two, referring to height, or six foot two)
- 5'8" (said: five feet eight inches)
- It was 78 degrees outside. (NOT 78°)
- 4 kg (but four kilograms if they say the whole word instead of abbreviating)
- 2x4 (said: two by four)
- 2'x4' (said: two feet by four feet)

Inexact numbers

There will be times when a person gives a rough estimate of a large number: *tens, a couple hundred, several thousand*. These should be written out in words, as spoken, since the exact number is not known.

On the other hand, the speaker may say something like *a hundred* or *a thousand*. This means exactly 100 or 1,000. You can use the numerals in this case. Similarly, if the speaker says *the hundred*, you would write this as *the 100*.

Also, when an exact number is used as part of an estimation, you can use numerals for the exact portion: *18 or so, 30-some thousand, around 150*.

Large Numbers

Millions and larger numbers are written out; however, the number part follows the general rule.

- Five million
- 15 billion
- Three trillion

Separate thousands with a comma.

- 2,000 books
- 13,000 attendees

Except for years and addresses.

- The year 2000
- 1346 Rose Avenue

Ordinals

Ordinals follow the general rule.

- The first example
- The 28th audio file
- The eighth grade

Phone numbers

Use the conventional formats.

- USA: 508-555-2232/1-508-555-2232
- UK: 07700 900632/44 7700 900632

When letters or words are given as part of a phone number, please use capital letters. Dashes should separate individual words as well as the typical number groups.

- 1-800-686-MORE
- 292-CALL-JAY

Serial numbers

Use the numeric format as spoken.

- Patient ID number 0543268.
- Product number 2256-4012 (when the hyphen or dash is spoken)

Percents

Are written out with a % sign and not spelled out.

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Example

- I only had 5% of my money refunded to me.
- He took 2.5% off the margins.

Except for general references and non-standard numbers.

- What percent of my time would you need? (no number)

- I think it would be 30-something percent full.
- I am a million percent behind that.

Names

Always use Google to search and format given names correctly.

- Mazda 6, 3 Series BMW
- Windows 10
- iPhone 6
- iPhone 5s
- Elizabeth II (said: Elizabeth the second)
- 7-Eleven stores
- type 2 diabetes
- a Title IV school
- World War II
- 5 Parklands Avenue
- Interstate 7

Fractions

Write out simple fractions.

- One-fourth
- Two-thirds
- Three and one-fifth

This may mean breaking with our usual formats at times.

- Three and a half dollars.
- Two-thirds of a percent.
- 17 and a half million.

Decimals

Please write numbers as decimals only if the speaker actually speaks it as a decimal, for example with the word *point* (the exception being money; see below). Spoken fractions should never be converted to decimals when transcribing. For decimals less than one, you may include a leading zero to make the decimal more readable, even if it is not spoken.

- It came out less than 0.75. (says point seven five)

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Time

Time always uses numerals. The format depends on what is said. If you are certain that the speaker is indicating a time, then it should be formatted as such, even if they do not use an explicit indicator like o'clock.

Always capitalize AM and PM.

- I got up at 5:00 AM this morning. *(only if they actually said AM)*
- I like to go to bed at 11:00. (says eleven)
- She slept past 10 o'clock this morning. *(only if they actually said o'clock)*
- I got up at 6:00 and worked until midnight.

Note that the numeral rule does not apply to measures of time.
- It is five past 3 o'clock.
- Meet me at a quarter to 2:00.
- I spent two weeks in Hawaii.
- I just need five minutes.

Military times:

Said as	Transcribed as
☐ oh six hundred hours	☐ 0600 hours
☐ fourteen fifty	☐ 14:50
☐ fourteen hundred hours PM	☐ 1400 hours PM
☐ oh six hundred	☐ 06:00
☐ oh six hundred AM	☐ 06:00 AM
☐ seven hundred	☐ 7:00

Time zones should be written in lowercase except for proper nouns. Abbreviations, when spoken as a series of letters, should be capitalized.

- eastern standard time; EST
- central daylight time; CDT
- mountain standard time; MST
- Pacific daylight time; PDT
- Greenwich mean time; GMT
- daylight saving time; DST

Money

If the currency is said, use the symbol for money depending on the country. If the currency is not said, don't use the symbol.

We use symbols for these currencies: $25, £9, €15 (said: dollars, pounds, euros). Other foreign currencies should be spelled out (25 rupees, 5 pesos).

If the type of dollar is specified, abbreviate the type before the $ sign: US$, NZ$, Can$, HK$.

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- US$10 (said: ten US dollars)
- NZ$5 million (said: five million New Zealand dollars)
- $4,000 (said: four thousand dollars, even though you might know it refers to Hong Kong dollars)
- She gave me $5 to go shopping.
- I wish I had $5 million but $50 million would be best.
- Your change will be 11.03. (The dollar was not said)
- I had 50 cents in my pocket.
- The company was worth $1.5 million.
- Did you see all those dollars in the pot?
- She gave me 5 bucks.

Sometimes money can be a bit tricky. If you are sure they are talking about money, then format it as money by using numerals and the appropriate decimal place. However, the actual currency symbol, such as the $ sign, should only appear if the word is spoken.

Numerical ranges and series

Sometimes, a speaker will use a sort of shorthand to denote several large numbers in a series. In this case, we spell out any common denominator after a series, and we follow the standard rules for formatting the rest.

- It would take 13, 14 hundred man-hours to get this done.
- I need 30 or 40 thousand widgets by next week.
- There were three to four hundred thousand people there.

Symbols should also be spelled out if they apply to more than one of the numbers spoken directly prior.

- Maybe 50 or 60 percent of my time is actually useful.
- Her change rate was just three to four percent.
- We had three donations of 30, 40, 50 thousand dollars.
- The upgrades will cost something like 1, 5, or maybe 8 dollars. (When referencing money always use numerals)

When transcribing a range of numbers, please write out the word **to** whenever it is spoken. Do not use a dash to represent a range.

- We have three to four good options.
- It will be somewhere between 1 to 2 hundred dollars.
- We have 3 to 4 good options, or maybe as many as 20.
- He changed it from 15 to 20.
- My company has 800 to 1,000 employees.

Addresses

When transcribing addresses always use numerals.

- 2345 SW 7th Street.
- 2 Bourbon Street.
- I live on 9th Street.

Dates

Always use numerals.

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- 5th of October, 2016
- October 5, 2016
- October 5th, 2016 (depending on what's said)
- The 2nd century AD

If a year is abbreviated, use an apostrophe to stand in for the missing digits.
- Where were the three of you in '88?
- It happened in the summer of 19-- or rather, in the fall of '08.

When a date is given in short format, by just stating the numbers, please type them in the order given and separate them with forward slashes.

- I was born 31/12/82.
- That's August 5th, 8/5.

Biblical references
Biblical references are given in numerals only; chapter and verse are separated by a colon with no space following it. A dash *may* be used in this case to indicate a range of verses, but only when following a colon.
- Acts 27:1 (said: Acts 27 verse 1)
- 2 Corinthians 11:28-30 (said: Second Corinthians chapter 11, 28 to 30)
- Look at verses 10 to 12.

Signs
Write out positive and negative symbols per what is spoken.

- I got a B plus in physics.
- The answer is negative three.
- It's plus or minus 32 degrees.

Exceptions for consistency
Where multiple numbers occur within a sentence or paragraph, maintain consistency in the immediate context. If according to the rule you must use numerals for one of the numbers in a given category, use them for all in that category. In the same sentence or paragraph, however, items in one category may be given as numerals and items in another spelled out.

- He had 15 ties but only 2 socks.
- It's $3 for one and I had five of them.
- After five days it was only 15% complete.
- A mixture of buildings - one of 103 stories, five of more than 50, and a dozen of only 3 or 4 - has been suggested for the area.
- I used to have the iPhone 6, but now I have the 7. Do you have the 8 yet?
- I wanted 10,500,012 babies. (very large number, but too specific to write out in words)

Resources
This guide covers rules specific to TranscribeMe. For style guidance on issues not covered here, we rely on the following resources.

- Chicago Manual of Style
- Merriam-Webster dictionary

You can also make use of independent grammar guides, such as Grammarly. This one works well with the WorkHub. Here is a link for you to install the Chrome extension.

https://grammarly.go2cloud.org/aff_c?offer_id=10&aff_id=10799

- Grammar Girl
- Purdue OWL

Finally, if you are unable to find the answer on your own, you can always ask for help from the transcriber community or administrators:

- Yammer - this is a quick way to get answers from other co-workers and even administrators. You will also be able to find valuable notes, which are located at the top and videos posted on the right-hand side under Network Sources. These will not display for you if using your phone app.
- Help Desk - https://helpdesk.transcribeme.com/portal/home
  If you are not able to find your answers on Yammer, you can create a ticket on the Help Desk. To ensure your question is answered in a timely manner, make sure you select the correct department.

Add Ticket

Department
Select a Department
Payments
Training
WorkHub Assignments and Extensions

Description

At times your chunk of the file might be a bit difficult to hear. Using audio enhancers can sometimes help. The below recommendations have free versions. We do not require you to buy any software to work with TranscribeMe.

DFX - https://www.fxsound.com

Boom 2 - http://www.globaldelight.com/boom

Hear - https://www.prosofteng.com/hear-audio-enhancer/

Please make sure that you read the TranscribeMe Transcriber Handbook. This will cover how to get started after you have passed your exam.

It will cover things such as:

- ❖ How to navigate the TranscribeMe WorkHub
- ❖ The Jobs tab
- ❖ Accent Abbreviations
- ❖ The Cancel Button
- ❖ Where do I find information?

- ❖ Help Desk
- ❖ Yammer
- ❖ Payments
- ❖ Payment Status
- ❖ How to make a withdrawal
- ❖ Rejections
- ❖ Rejection Inquiry
- ❖ Finding the file Change Percent
- ❖ Transcription Quality
- ❖ Transcriber requirements
- ❖ Troubleshooting

Update Notes

March 2, 2017

- added direction that full stops should be followed by only one space
- included spelling for common filler words (e.g. mm-hmm), for those special cases where they must be transcribed
- provided further examples of conjunctions and interjections used in transcription
- added the word *gotcha* to an example, indicating that it is okay to use in clean verbatim
- new section for Made-up Words and Other Noises
- added specific spelling rules for email and Internet
- new direction under Dashes to allow single dashes to set off a list within a sentence
- specified that zero should be spelled out, like other numbers nine or less
- included examples of measurements (e.g. 2x4) under Abbreviations and symbols
- extended the section on the word hundred to more clearly discuss exact vs inexact numbers
- new section on Decimals to specifically allow the inclusion of the leading zero (0.75)
- extended the Phone numbers section to cover letters as well as numbers.
- further clarification provided on Numerical ranges and series
- removed the direction to use a dash when expressing a range (15 to 20, not 15-20)
- extended the Times section to cover units of time (five minutes) and time zones
- extended the Dates section to cover abbreviated years ('88) and short dates (10/5/96)
- assorted other minor changes to clarify intent and provide more examples

November 28, 2016

Initial release of updated style guide.

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