

Overlap

Du Bois (in prep)

Do	Don't
Use square brackets exclusively for marking overlap.	Never use square brackets for anything other than overlapping speech (such as comments, phonetic transcription, etc.--for each of these, an alternative notation is provided).
Use a left square bracket to indicate the start of an overlap, and a right square bracket to indicate the end.	Don't leave the end of an overlap unmarked.
For every left bracket, there should be a corresponding right bracket for the same speaker.	Don't overlook cases of unmatched or stray brackets.
Align left brackets vertically, to iconically represent the same moment of discourse time.	Don't align right brackets. Never manipulate the transcription (by inserting spaces, etc.) to try to get the right brackets to overlap. Let the right brackets fall where they may.
Insert enough spaces (never tabs) before the second speaker's left bracket to make it align vertically with the first speaker's left bracket.	Never insert extraneous spaces in the middle of a word (e.g. in an attempt to get right brackets to align vertically). Space has a meaning which should be respected--it marks word boundaries--and the transcriber should not introduce spurious word boundaries by breaking up words.
If it is inconvenient to align left brackets vertically, this can be dispensed with as redundant, given that the numerical indexing of brackets alone is sufficient to unambiguously specify which bracket corresponds to which. In this case, the second overlap should begin at the left text margin.	Don't align left brackets if it makes the transcription difficult to read, i.e. don't do it if it forces the current intonation unit to wrap over to the next line.
Always close off the brackets for one overlap group before opening a new set of overlap brackets for the next overlap group. Do this whenever there is a change (i.e. an increase or decrease) in the number of participants in an overlap group (i.e. the set of simultaneous speakers).	Never embed one pair of overlap brackets inside another: This [should [2not] be] done. Never use two left overlap brackets together: [[Never use two right overlap brackets together:]]

<p>To avoid cases of possible confusion, index the left brackets in an overlap set with a distinctive subscript numeral, to indicate that all the left brackets with the same numeral represent the same instant of discourse time.</p>	<p>In general, do not index the right overlap bracket with a subscript numeral in cases where the number is redundant (i.e. when the [unindexed] right bracket occurs on the same line of the transcription as the [indexed] left bracket). However, the right bracket may be explicitly indexed when necessary, as when it appears on a different line from the corresponding left bracket.</p>
<p>Use plain brackets whenever possible, i.e. whenever the absence of indexing will not lead to confusion about who is overlapping with whom.</p>	<p>Don't number all brackets in a transcript just to have them numbered. This produces unnecessary clutter.</p>
<p>Index overlap brackets (when necessary) using the numerals 2-9 only. Remember that the first set of overlap brackets is always marked using plain brackets; the second set is indexed with the numeral 2, and so on.</p>	<p>Never index overlap brackets using the numerals 1 or 0. The numeral 1 looks like a (lower-case) letter L in many fonts, and the numeral 0 can be confused with the letter O.</p>
<p>If a large number of overlaps occur in a long sequence without interruption, it is sometimes necessary to start the indexing sequence over again from 2. The new sequence can be continued up to 9 again, cycling from 2 to 9 as many times as necessary.</p>	<p>Never use double digits for bracket indexing. On the other hand, also avoid using plain brackets in the middle of a complicated sequence of 10 or more distinctively indexed sets of brackets; the plain brackets don't stand out sufficiently among all those numbers.</p>
<p>As soon as it is convenient and unambiguous, the use of bracket indexing should be dropped in favor of using plain brackets. Plain brackets are to be preferred any time when there is no immediately prior case of overlap, that is, when at least one overlap-free intonation unit has occurred since the last case of overlap.</p>	<p>Don't number overlap brackets that occur following one or more overlap-free intonation units.</p>
<p>Note that the use of subscript formatting for the numerals that index overlap brackets is redundant. If the subscript format is not used (or is lost), no information is lost, since the use of a numeral adjacent to a square bracket unambiguously indicates overlap indexing.</p>	<p>Don't worry about preserving subscript formatting when, e.g., inserting transcription data into a database, because it is in principle redundant. The numbers are what matter, not the subscript font.</p>