



TRANSCRIPTION GENERAL STYLE GUIDE

FOR EMPLOYEES OF TRANSCRIBEME!

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Key Points to remember as you work on files

Please find a quick guide below of some key points to remember, which is then followed by the full style guide.

Misheard words: Please listen to the audio closely to ensure you are hearing words correctly and that your sentences actually make sense. If the sentence does not read correctly or does not make sense then please listen again for any misheard words. A good tool to use is DFX Audio Enhancer. This can help with the volume on some files, also if you're serious about doing transcription work it's always best to invest in a good pair of noise cancelling headphones. Too many [?] or [inaudible] could cause one of your files to be rejected.

Starting and ending files with ellipses, dashes or any other punctuation: You will be transcribing small micro tasks and these micro tasks are then put back together for a QA, which means you are **NEVER** to start or end a file with any sort of punctuation. You would only capitalize the first word of the file if a proper noun.

Inserting speaker ID: **Never** do any sort of speaker ID on a file you are transcribing. The QA's or transcribers that do single-step sessions input speaker ID. Doing so will get your files rejected.

Approved tags: We do not make up our own tags. Valid tags are, [silence], [laughter], [chuckles], [music], [inaudible], [applause], [foreign], [crosstalk], [?]. Never capitalize a tag. All tags go within the sentence and within the punctuation of that sentence. The [silence] tag goes on a line alone. The [music] and [applause] tags go outside of the punctuation. Using any other tags can cause your file to be rejected.

Filler words: In a clean verbatim file we **do not** use filler words. Some examples of filler words can be; Yeah, Oh, You know, Like, Okay, Uh, Um.

Clean verbatim versus full verbatim: Please make sure you are checking the file to find out what the requirements are for that particular file. We have several different styles that our clients require and you will find this information on the right hand side of the transcription box. Doing Um and Ah's on a clean verbatim file can cause rejections of your hard work.

Numbers: All numbers below nine are to be written out. Percentages are to be done as %.

Money should be written as \$40 or \$40 million. It is fine to start a sentence with a number if it is above ten. The main thing is to keep the number consistent throughout the sentence. Fractions are to be written out e.g three-fifths, time should be written as 8:30 AM.

False starts: A false start is where a speaker starts a sentence but corrects the thought very quickly and moves on. Generally, false starts involve just a few words and can safely be omitted. Example: The speaker says - **I stayed I went to the park**. You would type - I went to the park. **I stayed** would be a false start and can safely be left out. You can also omit Yeah, Okay replies from other speakers when it is not a response to a direct question.

In a clean verbatim files you are always to transcribe the words the speakers say, even if the speaker has poor grammar and cannot put together a sentence correctly. The only exceptions to this would be the words, **wanna, gonna, kinda** should always be written properly in a clean verbatim file as - **want to, going to, kind of**, only in a full verbatim file would use write them as they are spoken. So please **DO NOT write wanna, gonna, kinda in a clean verbatim file**.

In clean verbatim files you **are not** to expand out contractions, if the speaker says **it's** you **DO NOT** expand this out. If the speaker says **they're** you **DO NOT** expand it out. The word **Okay** **IS NOT** written, as **OK**. The word **because** **SHOULD NOT** be written as **'cause** and should always be written out. **All right** for **alright**, **A lot** for **alot**.

The use of ellipses and dashes can be very confusing at times, but if you follow this simple rule you will have no problems. Double dashes are used for when a speaker changes thought in mid-sentence or has been interrupted by another speaker.

Tom and I

were

going to

the-- Did

Jerry go

with you?

--game on Monday.

Please notice how the double dashes are used to continue the interrupted sentence from the first speaker. You would not capitalize the continued sentence unless it was a proper noun.

Jerry decided that he was-- he went to the pool instead.

Please notice how after the double dashes you would not space before but use one space after and never capitalize the next word after the double dash unless it is a proper noun.

Ellipses are used when a speaker trails off.

Did you see when...? [The speaker stops speaking and pauses giving the other person a chance to reply]. Do not over use ellipses during transcription. We try to use them sparingly and most times the double dash is needed because it is a change of thought.

Quotes are only used for actual quotes and nothing else. Punctuation goes within the quotes. Please make sure you read full rules on this in the style-guide. Names of books need to be capitalized.

Introduction

This style guide is for transcribers and QAs to use in their work at TranscribeMe and discusses general guidelines, punctuation, sentence structure, grammar, proper tag usage, and types 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.

Some clients may have specific requirements that are not in the style guide, and may even contradict the style guide. It is always important to check the guidelines on the work hub for client-specific requirements before you begin any transcription job or QA session. Please note: American spelling and punctuation rules are used in this style guide. If you will be working in the Commonwealth team, please refer to that guide for differences in spelling and punctuation.

If you have any concerns about the style guide, or feel that something has been left out of the guide, please e-mail shiftlead@transcribeme.com.

Full Verbatim or Clean Verbatim?

The default method for transcribing and reviewing documents in TranscribeMe is clean verbatim. Transcribing clean verbatim will often require the transcriber or QA to use their best judgment to decide whether certain words or phrases should be omitted. Transcribing clean verbatim should not be a daunting task, however. This section will provide a clear explanation of why clean verbatim is used, and will include examples of the difference between full verbatim and clean verbatim.

Why Use 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. Clean verbatim means that erroneous speech – such as crutch words and fillers – is omitted from the final document.

Clean verbatim also means that non-formal truncations of single words are corrected to the proper spelling. Words like gonna, 'cause, wanna, and dunno should be corrected to going to, because, want to, and don't know.

Words like ain't and ya'll are regional slang and can be left in clean verbatim jobs.

You will not expand contractions like don't, can't, or won't. Also, do not change words like it is or do not to *it's* or *don't*. However they are spoken, please leave the original words.

Crutch Words, Fillers and Stutters

The most common features of speech altered by clean verbatim are stutters, filler words and crutch words. Crutch words and filler words are erroneous additions to a sentence that do not add meaning or coherency to a sentence. They are usually used when a speaker is searching for a thought or deciding how to properly express what he or she is trying to say. They may also be used to elicit feedback from another speaker or audience.

Examples of crutch words and fillers can include the common *um* and *uh*, as well as phrases like *you know*, *like*, *I mean*, *I guess* and *maybe*. It is important that words like these are properly identified as crutches or fillers, because these terms can obviously be used in a way that is important to the meaning of a sentence. You can usually tell crutch words and fillers based on the context of their use and the way they are spoken. Consider the following examples:

Audio Example:

And, I guess just maybe thinking of your other ideas and some of the, like, um, suggestions you made earlier

Correct removal of crutch and filler words:

And, I guess just thinking of your other ideas and some of the suggestions you made earlier

You could also do this:

And just thinking of your other ideas and some of the suggestions you made earlier

Important: The word *like* can be deceptive. At times it may sound like it is being used as a crutch word when it is really being used to signify an approximation. For instance, "I was in bed for *like two weeks*" is a sentence where *like* is being used as an approximation of time and should not be omitted.

Stutters should be easier to identify. A stutter is the unnecessary repetition of a word or sound and should always be omitted in clean verbatim. However, please include words that are repeated deliberately for emphasis.

"The, the, the p-p-pizza was really, really good," should be transcribed as, "The pizza was really, really good."

Feedback Words

While working for TranscribeMe, you will frequently be required to transcribe interviews, meetings, and other audio files involving two or more speakers. In these audio files, you will usually hear people respond to the speaker using feedback words, such as *yeah*, *right*, *okay*, etc.

Please omit these feedback words and any feedback words like them if they are stand-alone interjections, or are *not* responses to a specific question that requires a response. Consider the following examples. Please note that you do not have to indicate different speakers as "S1", "S2" etc. in your actual transcriptions unless you are a QA. They are indicated this way for purposes of the example only.

Incorrect:

S1: I thought about it a lot and decided that I wanted to be a vegetarian.

S2: Right.

S1: But then I realized that would mean having to give up bacon. I'd forgotten that it was a meat.

Correct:

S1: So I thought about it a lot and decided that I wanted to be a vegetarian. But then I realized that would mean having to give up bacon. I'd forgotten that it was a meat.

If S1 had asked a question, then we would want to leave in **yeah** or **right** as a response.

Full Verbatim

You will sometimes run across full verbatim files. This means that you will actually transcribe everything you hear.

Hello, uh, today I'm going to talk about a super important subject which is ah, transcription, and, and it, it can be ah, an exciting career.

How to Build Sentences

When transcribing speech, it can be difficult to know when to end a sentence or begin a new one. People do not always speak in a way that conforms to formal sentence structure. In transcription, it is important to ensure that the document is easily readable. Long run-on sentences and sentence fragments should be avoided where possible. At times it may even be necessary to insert periods and begin new sentences, even if the speaker hasn't paused.

Clauses and Sentences

There are a great many of rules surrounding sentence structure, though few of them should be taken as the final word on sentence structure. In other words, the rules can be flexible. However, there are some very basic rules for forming sentences in such a way that transcriptions are clear and easy to read.

A common error among transcribers is to separate independent and dependent clauses with a period. A clause is a group of words containing a subject and predicate. An independent clause is a clause that can stand by itself as a complete sentence. It is the most basic sentence that can be written. An example of an independent clause is, "I am the Walrus."

A dependent clause is a sentence that cannot stand by itself because it implies that more is yet to come, or because it relies on a previous clause for its meaning. Often, dependent clauses begin with conjunctions like *but* and *because*. Here are examples of sentences with dependent clauses, with the dependent clause itself **in italics**. In each of these examples, it would be wrong to separate each of the clauses with a period.

Whenever I get the urge to exercise, I lie down until the urge passes.

- Robert M. Hutchins

If you tell the truth you don't have to remember anything.

- Mark Twain

In short, not only are things not what they seem, they are not even what they are called!

- Francisco Balagtas

Conjunctions

The other grammatical feature that can cause transcribers problems is the conjunction. A conjunction is the part of speech which connects clauses and sentences. The common conjunctions are *and*, *but*, *for*, *or*, *nor*, *yet*, and *so*.

Sometimes you may not want to begin sentences with conjunctions. However, this is not a universal rule (even in academic writing) and **many** grammatically correct sentences begin with conjunctions like "and" or "but". It is okay to begin a sentence like this and is often a good way to break up run-on sentences. If used excessively, though, it is also okay to eliminate them.

Finally, be wary of words like *because* which can be used as conjunctions but do not always count as conjunctions. Consider the following example of a correctly punctuated sentence:

"It was a cold day. Because it was so cold, I took a coat."

It would be **incorrect** to write, "It was a cold day because it was so cold. I took a coat."

Other examples may not be so obvious, so try to be careful when terminating or beginning sentences. Listen to the tone of the speaker in addition to paying attention to the use of words as tone can often suggest when it is appropriate to begin a new sentence.

Punctuation

The principal role of punctuation in a transcription is to mark the structure and intonation of a sentence as it is spoken. It should also be used to add clarity to a sentence where faithfully representing the structure and intonation of a sentence would make it difficult to read. A long sentence containing a lot of different subjects, objects, and ideas may need to be broken up with commas, even if the speaker does not actually pause.

Commas

The correct use of the comma is usually determined by whether or not the comma adds clarity to the idea the speaker is trying to convey. A comma indicates a pause in a sentence. There are four ways to generally use commas in transcription.

1

Between Items in a Series

When three or more items in a sentence are listed, place a comma between each item.

I purchased my books, computer, and smart phone before going to college.

If the last comma is omitted, it would imply a relationship between the last two items in the list. Sometimes the last comma is left off, but at TM we do include the last comma in a list of three or more items.

2

Between Two Sentences

Remember, when putting together sentences using this rule, they must be complete sentences on either side of the conjunction. Look at this example.

I was very happy to hear about the changes in policy, and we all agreed to talk about it at our next meeting.

Without the conjunction "and" these are complete sentences. When joining two complete sentences with a conjunction, you must use a comma.

A common mistake in transcription is joining two independent sentences with a comma that do not contain a conjunction such as "and" or "but."

I was very happy to hear about the changes in policy, I agreed to talk about it at our next meeting.

This is not correct and these kinds of sentences should not be joined by a comma. If a conjunction is not present in the audio, do not add one. The proper way would be to make these two sentences with periods or even a semicolon if necessary.

If you have a very short sentence - five to ten words - you may omit the comma. Remember, commas are used to increase the readability of the transcription. For a sentence like this, it is fine to omit a comma.

The woman was old and she was wise.

3

To Attach Words to the Front or the Back of your Sentence

- Certainly, she is an excellent example of what hard work can accomplish.
- Although he is not trained as an astronomer, he certainly knows a lot about the subject.
- In order to make the customer happy, the company refunded the entire purchase price.

4

To Offset Non-essential Information

The comma offsets non-essential information but it is used slightly differently. It is easier to think of the dash being used to emphasize a stronger and more emphatic shift than commas do. We will talk about dashes later.

- Mary, who is a good student, loves to study foreign languages.
- Mary - known by the entire campus as a brainy, friendly, and enthusiastic student - loves to study foreign languages.

Finally, do not enclose essential information inside commas. Remove information enclosed by commas to see if the sentence stands alone. If it does, the nonessential information can be enclosed by commas. Proper comma usage is also necessary with quotation marks and when transcribing dates and we will talk about this shortly.

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**.

The compound adjective is a word that is made up of a noun and an adjective, a noun and a participle, or an adjective and a participle. A participle is the form a verb takes to create tenses or adjectives using suffixes such as *-ing* or *-ed* (e.g. *I looked for the broken glass. I am waiting for the train*).

Consider the following examples of compound adjectives:

Noun + adjective

- Accident-prone

- Long-winded
- Carbon-neutral
- All-inclusive

Noun + participle

- Custom-built
- User-generated
- Family-owned

Adjective + participle

- Good-looking
- Quick-thinking
- Bad-tempered

Apostrophes

The apostrophe is a mark of punctuation used to indicate a missing letter (usually in a contraction) and also to identify a noun in the possessive case. Using the apostrophe in contractions is straightforward – *I'm, you're, he's, she'd* etc. Using it to signal the possessive case is a little more complicated making the apostrophe one of the most commonly misused mark of punctuation in English writing.

Use an apostrophe with an *-s* for possessives of singular nouns. The apostrophe should still be used even if the singular noun ends with an *s*.

Shakespeare's plays

William James's psychology

Today's date

The house's front door

The empress's court

If the noun is plural, use an apostrophe only and do not add an –s.

- The girls' shoes (the shoes belonging to the girls)
- The soldiers' uniforms (the uniforms belonging to the soldiers)
- The Chengs' holiday home (belonging to the Chengs)

If the plural noun does not end in -s, add an apostrophe plus –s.

- The women's organization (the organization for women)
- The children's toys (the toys belonging to the children)
- The people's anger (the anger of the people)

It is normally wrong to use an apostrophe to form a plural. Please note: this includes **dates** and **acronyms**.

The years passed slowly.

The QAs eliminated the errors.

The TVs were expensive.

The 1990s were a strange time.

Colons and Semicolons

The colon and the semi-colon can be useful in formal writing. However, they should be used very sparingly in transcriptions. The semi-colon in particular is often misused, as the rules governing its usage can be unclear. As a rule, dashes, commas, and even periods should be favored over the colon and semi-colon. However, do not feel as though you should shy away from using them altogether. In general, semicolons should only be used to connect two closely related independent clauses that **aren't** separated by a coordinating conjunction, like *and*, *yes*, *but* or so.

When I was a boy, I was told that anybody could become president; I'm beginning to believe it.

- Clarence Darrow

The No Child Left Behind Act does not assert a national achievement standard; standards are set by each individual state.

Both these examples benefit from semicolons even though both would still make sense without one being inserted. They may be particularly useful when a speaker talks at length without breaking. In these situations, the semicolon may add clarity to long, unwieldy sentences with lots of ideas. In short, use your best judgment, but if you are in doubt it is perhaps better to refrain from using it altogether.

The rules for colon usage are easier to follow. They should only be used after a main clause which introduces a list, an explanation or a quotation.

I'll keep it short and sweet: family, religion, friendship. These are the three demons you must slay if you wish to succeed in business.

- Mr. Burns (The Simpsons)

When Churchill became Prime Minister, he had an uncompromising message for the British public: "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat."

Always remember that only a complete main clause may be followed by a colon. Sentence fragments and individual words should not be.

Quotation Marks

Here are the guidelines for using quotation marks at TranscribeMe.

Use double quotation marks any time an individual or a group is being quoted.

He said, "I hope things are going well for you."

They asked us, "How many people do you think will be joining?"

She told the committee, "I would like to recommend that we postpone this decision until next Wednesday."

The children asked their teacher, "Why do we have to study math, Mr. Edwards?"

These are all very straightforward in that someone is being quoted, therefore use double quotes. Remember that double quotes come in pairs. Don't forget both opening and closing quotes.

Capitalize the first letter of a quote if the quotation is a complete sentence.

The director of the facility said, "I have no doubt we should be doing this."

"I honestly don't know the answer to the question," she replied.

"That is exactly right," he stated.

They told us several times, "You can't come in here."

Do not use a capital letter for an interrupted quote, as shown in the examples below. Put periods and commas inside quotation marks. Please note the areas where there are no capitals as well as comma, period, and question mark placement.

"I love," said John, "to work at TranscribeMe."

"Can I," asked the student, "turn in my paper now?"

"I can," he yelled, "bike 50 miles a day."

Put semicolons and colons outside quotation marks.

They described the venture as a "positive step in the right direction"; the other investors disagreed.

He described three elements of what he calls his "great educational journey": supportive teachers, personal commitment, and a great college.

Question marks and exclamation points go either inside or outside quotation marks, depending on the sentence.

He asked, "Do you need the book now?"

The children shouted, "Ice cream truck is coming!"

Does the teacher always say, "You must work harder"?

Internal Dialogue

What about when a speaker talks about thoughts of others or themselves in your audio? This is internal dialogue and for consistency, it is still treated like a direct quotation at TM.

I thought to myself, "How in the world is that possible?"

He was like, "Yeah, isn't that something?" I said to myself, "I just can't believe it ended up that way."

Note the word like here. It is used as a substitute for **said** and will often happen in transcription. It is okay to leave it in.

Note: All titles, books, movies, et cetera are capitalized - no need for quotations.

What about single quotation marks? Most of the time, you will use double quotation marks because the speaker in the audio is quoting someone. If the person being quoted quotes someone themselves, use a single quote like this.

I was talking to him the other day and he was like, "Yes. The director said to me, 'Why don't you invite the entire team next year?'"

Although there are other grammar rules regarding use of quotes in unique situations, these are the primary guidelines for using them in your transcription work. Remember, the goal of a transcription is an accurate recording of a conversation so a simpler set of rules makes sense.

Indirect Quotes: Indirect quotes do not use quotation marks, because nobody is actually being quoted. An indirect quote is when a speaker paraphrases or relates what an individual or a group has said, but the speaker does not use a direct quotation.

The teacher reported that most of her class was out with the flu last week.

He always did say he would rather live in the mountains.

Dashes

Dashes are well suited for transcription work because speakers will often break their flow of speech, add emphasis, insert an afterthought, list something, or offer additional explanations.

At TranscribeMe, a dash is used when a speaker interrupts his or her sentence to add relevant but non-essential information to the sentence. If you remove the information contained between the dashes, the sentence still makes sense.

- The customer service desk - **customer service agents being located all over the world** – can handle all your inquiries related to this.
- It began to rain so hard - **unusual in this area for the month of August** - I went back to the coffee shop and finished my book.

Dashes insert information and introduce lists. One of the dash's jobs is to show that the speaker has temporarily changed direction to new, but related, information.

- As soon as we go to the bookstore - **there are several book shops down this street alone** - we can go home.

Finally, a dash can offset a word or phrase as in the example below.

- Things have changed a lot in the last year - **mainly for the better**.

The Ellipsis

At TM, the ellipsis (plural is ellipses) is used when a person's speech trails off and they are not being interrupted. It should be a true trailing off with several seconds of silence afterwards. Otherwise, it would end with a period or even double dash if the speaker is being interrupted. Double dashes are discussed below. Ellipses are not commonly used and in many circumstances, you would simply use a period.

I wasn't actually saying that...

He said that was the case, but then again...

I don't really know. I honestly don't...

If a speaker is trying to get a response from someone else by asking a question but not finishing it, please end it like this.

That is right, but it also is...?

Transcription Style

Transcription work has a set of problems unique to the task of copying out the spoken word. Audio files can suffer from poor recording quality, speakers are often inaudible, and there are sometimes non-verbal sounds that need to be noted down. TranscribeMe has a specific set of rules for dealing with all these problems and more. They will be outlined in the following sections.

False starts and interruptions

Speakers will commonly make mistakes which prompt them to begin their sentence over. This is referred to as a false start. In addition to this, if the audio file you are transcribing is an interview, speakers may also interrupt each other. Both these things can make transcription difficult.

At TranscribeMe, false starts and interruptions are both marked with a **double dash**. You can insert a double dash by striking the hyphen key twice and should look like this [--]. The double dash should come **immediately** (without a gap) after the word where the speaker breaks away to start again, or the word at which the speaker is interrupted by another speaker.

Please note that not all false starts or mistakes should be marked this way. If the speaker corrects him or herself quickly after a false start it will usually not be necessary to transcribe the false start verbatim.

Instead, omit the error, and transcribe the correct sentence without the false start. Only mark the false start if the speaker talks at length before correcting him or herself, or if omitting the error would make the transcription more confusing. Consider the following examples.

Once when I was young, I went to the store to sell-- I was going to the store to buy a present for my parents.

My dad used to always say that he thought that-- he always cooked because he thought that it was wrong to let my mom cook for him all the time.

Both these are examples of cases where a speaker has begun a thought and then changed it. The first one is changed because the speaker has made a mistake. The second one is changed because the speaker's train of thought changes half-way through the sentence. Both are examples of false starts. In the second example in particular it would be wrong to omit the false start because it introduces the subject of the sentence the dad.

However, if the false start is brief enough for it to be cut without sacrificing coherency or a significant chunk of speech then it can be omitted. For example:

I went to the vet-- to the store to buy coffee. Should read, I went to
the store to buy coffee.

In this case, the speaker has merely uttered the wrong word (*vet* instead of *store*) and changed it instantly. A file transcribed in clean verbatim should usually omit such insignificant errors.

The rules for marking **interruptions** are simpler. At the point where the speaker is interrupted, insert a double dash. If you are a transcriber, you do not have to indicate different speakers as “S1”, “S2” etc. in your actual transcriptions; they are indicated this way for purposes of the example. It is a QA's role to add Speaker IDs.

S1 When I was working at my last company I would-- S2 What
company did you work at?

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

S1 How long have you been working at your current--?
S2 About two years.

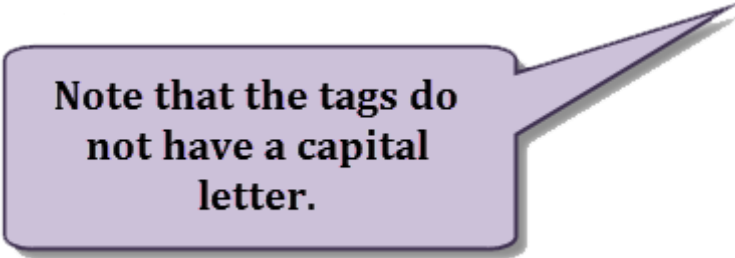
Tagging Non-verbal Sounds and Inaudible Speech

In transcription, you will often encounter non-verbal sounds, laughter, inaudible speech, and applause. These are often important to capture because they add meaning to the transcription. Here is the list of tags used at TranscribeMe.

[?] This tag is used if you have no idea what the speaker is saying. It could be a difficult accent or a word you simply cannot find in research.

[inaudible] Use this tag when poor audio quality obscures a word or words.

[applause] If there is applause in the recording, use this tag.



**Note that the tags do
not have a capital
letter.**

[music] This tag is used when music is meant to be in the recording. If it is background music, you can ignore it. If there is background music that obscures the speaker, you can put [inaudible].

[crosstalk] If people talk across each other and you can't understand any of it, you may use this tag.

[foreign] Used when you hear a word or phrase in a foreign language.

[silence] If there is no speaking for more than ten seconds, use this tag and put the tag on its own line.

If you are not entirely sure what a word is but are fairly certain or can make an educated guess, put the word in brackets with a question mark. [San Juan Islands?]

[laughter] This is used when a single speaker or multiple speakers are laughing.

[chuckles] When a speaker audibly chuckles, you may use this tag.

Note: Tags are helpful for giving the reader of a transcription additional information and sets the tone of a conversation. For the tags [chuckle] and

[laughter] it is not necessary to capture every single instance someone might laugh as long as the general mood is captured.

Please do not spend too much time worrying whether someone chuckled versus laughed. Remember, we are going for a clean, readable transcription. Accuracy in transcription is far more important than whether every chuckle is transcribed. Take a look at the examples below, noting that if you are a transcriber, it is the QA's job to insert speaker IDs.

Where are tags placed in a sentence?

The [laughter], [chuckle], [foreign], [inaudible], [?], and [crosstalk] tags are placed inside punctuation.

The [silence] tag has its own line. Both [music] and [applause] should go outside of punctuation.

Take a look at the examples below:

S1 I'll have to think about that.

[silence]

S2 Would you like a little longer to think this through?

- We saved the best for last. [music] Our next guest needs no introduction. Please give it up for Sir Patrick Stewart. [applause]
- Way to go. That is the best [laughter] I've heard yet.
- Take a seat anywhere if you can find one [chuckle].

Important: Some audio files may contain technical language, or make references to products, objects or places that are unfamiliar to you. It is expected that QAs and transcribers make an effort to get unfamiliar words or phrases correct by researching on the Internet. If you still cannot be sure of the correct word after searching online, either guess the word and place it in square brackets, or insert the [?] tag, as outlined above.

Before tagging anything as inaudible or indecipherable please also make an effort to listen to the word or phrase before giving up. It also helps to take into account what is being said. If a word or phrase makes no sense in context, it is probably wrong. Here is an example of a transcription that is clearly wrong:

S1 Do you and your fence watch a lot of TV together?

S2 I watch a lot with him because he is usually punctured into the TV.

It should be obvious to all transcribers that the previous exchange has been misheard. Instead of submitting a transcription with obvious errors like these, please try to listen for words that would make sense in context, and if you still have trouble, resort to the tags outlined above.

Numbers

Numbers one through ten are written out. Numbers 11 and above, please use numerals. The exception to this would be if there are numbers below ten and over 11 in one sentence.

In this case, it is fine to use all numbers. *I had 3 cats and 11 dogs.*

When you are writing phone numbers, please type out the numbers like this: 508555-2232

Percentages are written out with a % not spelled out. 5%, 20%

For fractions please type them out. Do not use 1/4th. Instead, write one fourth.

For times use 5:00 AM or 5:00 in the morning, depending on what is said in the transcription.

For very, very large numbers such as million or trillion write them like this: one billion bugs or 50 million people.

For money use \$5 or \$25. For very large dollar amounts use \$5 million, \$50 million. Use all numbers but spell out cents as in 5 cents.

Common Spelling and Grammar Errors

Your/You're

You're is a contraction of you are while *your* is a possessive. For example: *You're crazy if you think your sandals are appropriate for climbing in the Himalayas.*

It's/Its

Similar to *you're* and *your*, *it's* is a contraction of 'it is' or 'it has' while *its* is a possessive pronoun. For example: *It's going to be cold tonight so please put the dog in its kennel.*

They're/Their/There

They're is a contraction of 'they are', *their* is a possessive pronoun, while *there* is usually used to refer to a place. For example: *They're getting impatient, so we should bring them their meals. The plates are over there.*

A lot/Alot

Never use *alot* when referring to quantity as it is not an English word. The proper spelling is *a lot*.

All right/ Alright

Like *a lot*, *alright* is not an English word. The correct spelling is *all right*.

Please use okay not OK. Use TV not T.V. Use yeah not yea.

Something is **loose** if it needs to be tightened up.

If you don't win, you **lose**.

General Guidelines

Transcribers and QAs are expected to maintain a basic standard of quality. We understand that it is hard to ensure that a transcription is perfect – especially when the quality of the recording is not good – but there are a few simple things you can do to avoid making obvious mistakes.

- Please be careful to spell-check your work. It is unprofessional to return an error-ridden document to the client.
- Please listen to the audio you are transcribing to make sure the transcription makes sense. Sometimes, what is being said can provide sufficient context to correctly identify a word you are having trouble with.
- Be careful with punctuation. Make sure sentences are coherent and words are capitalized correctly. Please avoid over use of the exclamation point.
- Remember to use one space after periods and place a blank line between speakers if you are transcribing. QA will take care of Speaker IDs and timestamps.
- Make sure names are spelled correctly. When in doubt you should research online. This is especially important for files with lots of references to names of products or places.

- Finally, and most importantly, **make sure your transcription is accurate.** Do not rush through passages you are having trouble with. If you have tried to make out passages of speech but are still stuck, use the tags provided in this style guide.

Useful Resources

If you are struggling with grammar or syntax issues that are not covered in this guide, or want further clarification, feel free to post on Yammer. However, there are a lot of useful and comprehensive websites that cover grammar and syntax issues in great detail. However, if anything in this style guide contradicts grammatical rules you have read elsewhere, follow *this* style guide unless otherwise instructed.

<http://grammar.about.com/>

A comprehensive guide to composition and grammar written by Richard Nordquist, who is professor emeritus of rhetoric and English at Armstrong Atlantic State University.

<http://oxforddictionaries.com/>

The online component of the Oxford Dictionary.

<http://grammar.quickanddirtytips.com/>

Mignon Fogarty's guide to common spelling, grammar, and syntax questions.

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/>

A very useful online dictionary that includes small articles on various issues in grammar and spelling.

Happy Transcribing!