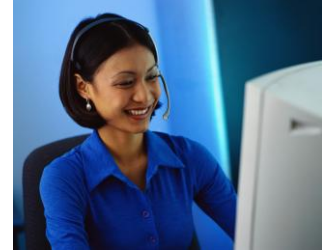


From Speech to Type: The Truth About Transcription

Transcription is the process of converting spoken dialogue into written, typewritten or printed form, as in the proceedings of a court hearing. It can also mean the conversion of a written source into another medium, as by scanning books and making digital versions. Basically a recorded meeting, presentation, etc. is played back for the purpose of typing out what was said on paper. Although the process may sound simple, it is anything but.



Transcription takes practice and those who offer transcription as part of their services know the importance of speed and accuracy. A transcribed document is only as good as the sound quality of the audio being transcribed. Companies actually end up paying more for a low quality audio.

According to the industry guidelines published by the Association of Business Support Services, International (ABSSI), each minute of speech takes 3 to 5 minutes to type. If you type 80wpm and transcribe a 60 minute audio with just one speaker, the sound quality is excellent and there are no accents, then the document will be transcribed somewhere between 2 1/5 to 3 hours. However the following will affect how long it will take to transcribe that same audio:

- More than one speaker
- Strong foreign accent
- Background noise
- Overlapping dialogue
- Background discussions
- Person speaking without a microphone
- Mumbling or stuttered speech
- Unclear speaker



These issues can cause a 60 minute audio to turn into a 5 or 6 hour transcript. This is a transcriptionist's worst nightmare.

A transcriptionist's preferred audio should have the following characteristics:

- Clear sounding digital audio. Although a transcriptionist will accept standard, micro or mini cassette recordings, digital audio generally has a much clearer sound. In most cases the cassette recording will be converted to digital format and the client will incur an additional charge.
- More than one speaker is fine, but each speaker must speak into a microphone and if the name of each speaker is to be captured, then they should say their name each time before they speak, especially when there are 3 or more speakers.
- Provide any documents such as agenda, notes or presentation that goes along with the audio.

- Provide the correct spelling of the names of each speaker.
- Provide formatting instruction.
- Provide notification as early as possible that you will be recording audio you will need to have transcribed. This allows the transcription service you choose to make sure they have staff ready to take on your work once it is received. Early notification helps the transcriptionist be better prepared to meet your deadline.



Many companies prefer fast turnaround, sometimes in as little as 24 to 48 hours. Keep in mind that 6 hours of audio will take approximately 18 to 30 hours to transcribe.

In regards to setting rates for transcribing, keep in mind that not everyone transcribes at the same speed. So when using sub-contractors the best payment method is by per audio minute. Never pay a transcriptionist by the hour unless you know for a fact that their speed and accuracy matches your own.

For example, if you have 3 transcriptionists and you offer to pay each one the same hourly rate of \$20 an hour to transcribe a 60 minute audio and they each have different typing speeds, this could be the result:



- Transcriptionist A takes 5.5 hours to transcribe the 60 minute audio, which means she'll be paid \$110.
- Transcriptionist B takes 4.2 hours to transcribe the 60 minute audio, which means she'll be paid \$84.
- Transcriptionist C takes 3 hours to transcribe the 60 minute audio, which means she'll be paid \$60.

Now you take the same 3 transcriptionist with the same 60 minute audio file and pay them per audio minute at a rate of \$1.00 per audio minute. All three will make the same amount of money, \$60. However, Transcriptionist A would actually be making \$10.91 per hour. Transcriptionist B would actually be making \$14.29 per hour. And Transcriptionist C would make \$20 per hour.

Transcription services also charge by the line, word, page, audio minute and hour. The company or industry sometimes determines the payment terms and method. Hospitals prefer to be billed per line sometimes with the line count long the left-hand margin. Other companies want to include time stamps throughout the document for editing purposes.

In order to be able to transcribe audio you must have the appropriate equipment and software. I won't go into great detail on this other than to say one of the more popular software on the market that a great deal of transcriptionist use is Express Scribe. Express Scribe is a transcription software that allows you to load digital audio and video so that you can use a foot pedal to transcribe the document. With Express Scribe you can also choose to use your keyboard in lieu of a foot pedal.

To download a free copy of Express Scribe copy and paste this link into your browser: <http://www.nch.com.au/scribe/>. You can find another great resource for various transcription software and equipment at www.transcriptiongear.com.

If you are thinking about becoming a transcriptionist or just wanted to know more, this article should provide you a little insight into the world of a transcriptionist. If you've never transcribed before but you type 60wpm, it will be a learning curve to train yourself to listen and type what you hear at the same time. It just takes practice. The transcription industry is a big one, and if you want to be a part of it, the time to start practicing is now.

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