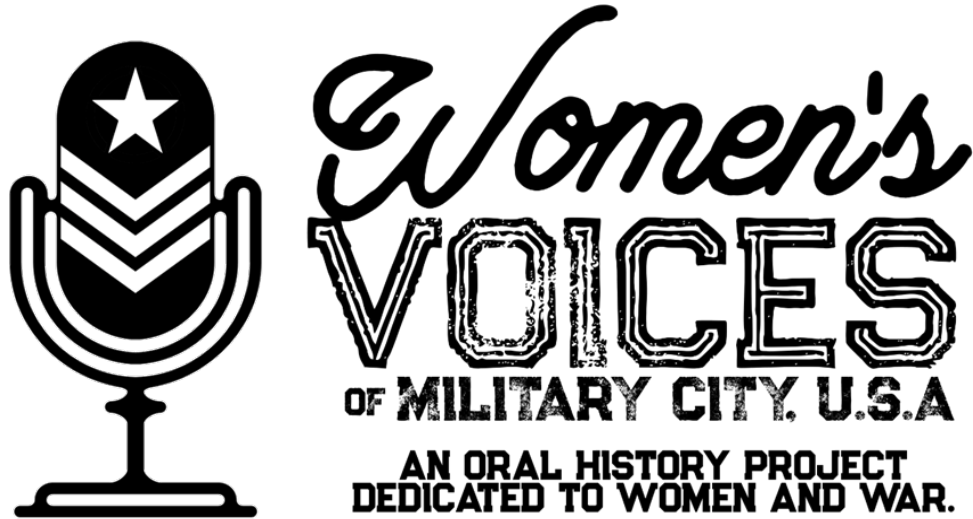


University of Texas San Antonio & Our Lady of the Lake University

## Oral History Transcription Guide



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## Oral History Transcription Guide

### INTRODUCTION

A transcript is the printed representation of a recorded (audio or video) interview. The goal of the transcriber is to create a written document of the event. The following suggestions will assist you as you contribute to the historical record.

#### I. WHY SHOULD TRANSCRIPTIONS EXIST

- Transcriptions provide an easier medium for understanding and digesting the information.
- The shelf life of paper exceeds the shelf life of modern technology and is more reliable.
- Software is available for transcriptions and is constantly being improved.
- Transcriptions are easily archived.

#### II. TRANSCRIPTIONS ARE VALUABLE BUT ALWAYS REMEMBER

- Transcriptions are time-consuming (10 hours of work to 1 hour of interview)
- Transcriptions can become very expensive (due to the level of the transcriber and the amount of content that needs to be transcribed)
- Transcriptions may leave out important information that can be observed on the sound or video recording (sarcasm, facial expression, body language)
- Use reliable sources to store the recordings for future uses for both public and scholarly establishments.
- Audio and visual is important to enhance the experience and perspective of the subject.

#### III. RULES FOR TRANSCRIBING

- Use a basic, easy to read font. Calibri is the suggested font for its ease to read and look at.
- Begin every transcript with date, who you are, the reason for the interview, where you are interviewing including city and state, and who you are interviewing.
  - Example: [00:00:01]
    - **WIND:** Today is February 29 2020, my name is Lisa Wind, and I am interviewing Jennifer Garza, For the NEH funded Oral History Project dedicated to women and war. We are at Our Lady of the

Lake University in San Antonio, Texas. Thank you for agreeing to this interview.

- Set margins to 1.25 inches on all sides. This will ensure that no words are cut off when placing the transcript into a binder. i.e. This document has margins set to 1.25 all around for binding purposes.
- Place time stamps correctly for both interviewer and interviewee. Example:
  - [00:00:01]
  - **GARZA:** I heard you were a member of the...
  - [00:00:20]
  - **WIND:** Yes, I was a member of...
- Use only one word when a stutter occurs. Emphasized words however should be repeated in the transcript.
- Check for correct grammar (affect vs effect).
- Spell out acronyms if known, insert after acronym in parentheses after.
  - Example: Dead on arrival (DOA).
- Leave in filler words and phrases (Um, uh, ok, like).
- Page numbers should be located on the bottom right hand side of the page.
- Only use quotations if the interviewee is quoting someone else.
  - Example: (and their students said, “Dr. Gardner and Dr. Martinez are national treasures.”)
- When the speaker spells out the words, separate letters with hyphens.
  - Example: t-r-e-a-s-u-r-e
- At the end of the transcription write End of Interview and italicize it.
  - Ex: *[End of Interview]*
- The Transcriber’s name goes underneath the *[End of Interview]* along with the date it was last worked on.
  - Ex: Transcriber: John Smith, May 13, 2018.

#### IV. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- For more information about the aforementioned rules please see: [Guide to Transcribing and Summarizing Oral Histories \(oregon.gov\)](#)
- For further information on grammar and syntax please see: [Oral History | Minnesota Historical Society \(mnhs.org\)](#)
- For information concerning quotations please see: [Transcription - Oral History: Best Practices and Procedures - LibGuides at Guilford College](#)

\*“Women and War” thanks the [Institute for Oral History at Baylor University for their transcription guide](#) which provided the foundational material within the current document.

## V. SAMPLE TRANSCRIPTION DOCUMENT

### NEH Funded: "Military City, U.S.A:

#### An Oral History Project Dedicated to Women and War"

A collaborative project between the University of Texas San Antonio and  
Our Lady of the Lake University, San Antonio, Texas

NARRATOR: Dr. Kirsten E. Gardner

INTERVIEWER: Dr. Valerie A. Martinez

DATE: March 5, 2020

LOCATION: Our Lady of the Lake University, San Antonio, Texas

|00:00:00|

**MARTINEZ:** Today is March 5, 2020, and I, Dr. Valerie A. Martinez, am interviewing Dr. Kirsten E. Gardner for the NEH Funded Project: An Oral History Project Dedicated to Women and War. We are at Our Lady of the Lake University located in San Antonio, Texas. Dr. Gardner, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed today.

[00:00:30]

**GARDNER:** Thank you, it is my pleasure.

[00:00:35]

**MARTINEZ:** Tell me about yourself, what is your birthdate, where were you born?

[00:00:42]

**GARDNER:** My birthdate is.....and I was born.....blah blah 5 minutes pass.

|00:05:42|

**MARTINEZ:** Another question.....

[00:06:00]

**GARDNER:** more answering.....an hour later....

|01:07:00|

*End of Interview*

Transcriber: Name and Date

### **Alternate Method**

Instead of time stamping after every question, you may also include the time at the beginning of your segment (paragraph of text) and at the conclusion.

V1 – 00:00:00 – 00:05:16

V2 – 00:05:16 – 00:10:32

V3 – 00:10:32 – 00:15:48

V4 – 00:15:48 – 00:21:04

V5 – 00:21:04 – 00:26:20

V6 – 00:26:20 – 00:31:36

V7 – 00:31:36 – 00:36:52

The following [online time calculator](#) can assist with your calculations.

## **VI. COMMON TRANSCRIPTION MISTAKES AND FIXES**

### **1. PAGE AESTHETICS**

- a. Make sure the 1st page looks like the draft on the transcript guide. Use our heading, etc. **[look at top of page 7]**
- b. In the first and second breaks put: pause in recording in italics. At the end of the interview put: end of interview also in italics. EX. *[End of Interview]*

### **2. CAPITALIZATIONS**

- a. If a word is not the title of a place or thing do not capitalize it. For example: What-A-Burger. If it is the name of the place or a location then it should be capitalized. If it is not the title, and they just mention it

casually, do not capitalize it. Check out the Baylor guide on capitalization too.

- b. The names need to be in all caps. You can see the guide for an example. [ex. **SAENZ**].

### 3. **FILLER AND/OR CRUTCH WORDS**

- a. While there is some merit in having an absolutely verbatim transcript, including every word and sound uttered makes for tedious transcribing now and exhausting reading later. Type no more than two crutch words per occurrence per page or one per paragraph. Crutch words are words, syllables, or phrases of interjection designating hesitation and are characteristically used instead of pauses to allow thinking time for the speaker. They also may be used to elicit supportive feedback or simple responses from the listener, such as: “you know?” “see?” or, “understand?”
  - i. Incorrect Example: GARDNER: You know, I never thought about it that way, but, you know, I can see how, you know, some people might do that. Correct Example: GARDNER: I never thought about it that way, but I can see how some people might do that."
  - ii. You do not have to italicize filler or crutch words.
- b. Use of “uh”: The most common word used as a crutch word is “uh”. When “uh” is used by the narrator as a stalling device or a significant pause, then type “uh”. Sometimes a person will repeatedly enunciate words ending with a hard consonant with an added “uh,” as in “and-uh”, “at-uh”, “did-uh”, “that-uh”, “in-uh”. Other examples are “to-uh”, “of-uh”, “they-uh”. In these instances, do not type “uh”. Source: [https://www.baylor.edu/old/2021-02/\\_oralhistory/doc.php/14142.pdf](https://www.baylor.edu/old/2021-02/_oralhistory/doc.php/14142.pdf)

### 4. **ABBREVIATIONS**

- a. In general, avoid abbreviation in oral history transcripts. One general rule requires that a civil or military title appearing before a surname only should be spelled out, but it should be abbreviated before a given name and/or initial(s) plus surname. Ex: **Governor Perry**, but **Gov. Rick Perry**.

### 5. **SOUNDS**

- a. When a narrator laughs or makes a sound, your description of the sound should be in lowercase and within parentheses. You do not need to italicize. For example: (laughs) or (laughing). Ex: So then I slipped, (laughs) and my brother laughed at me.

### 6. **ELLIPSES**

- a. You should avoid using ellipses. (...) It will make it seem as if there is something missing from the transcript. It is okay if there is a pause. Please see the Baylor guide on ellipses and pauses. <https://www.baylor.edu/oralhistory/doc.php/14142.pdf>

## 7. ACRONYM

- a. When it comes to acronyms, spell out the first one and put it in brackets and then thereafter you can use the acronym. EX: OCS [Officer Candidate School], do this for PT, MOS, MEPS, etc. When you use it thereafter, you don't have to keep explaining what it means, you can just use the acronym.
- b. Ex:  
[00:30:22] **SAENZ:** I went down to the MEPS [Military Entrance Processing Station] in downtown San Antonio.  
[00:31:00] **SAENZ:** At the MEPS they told me everything I needed to know about the Army.

## 8. TIMESTAMPS

- a. If the narrator talks for 20+ minutes, break up each paragraph approximately every 5 minutes.
- b. Make sure you are accounting for hours: minutes: seconds. If you want to put a timestamp at 43 seconds. 43:00 is incorrect because it looks like you're 43 minutes into the interview. The correct way should be, 00:00:43. (HH:MM:SS)

## 9. CURSE WORDS AND PROFANITY

- a. For most transcriptions, profanity is taken out or censored. If your organization/school decides to leave in the curse words/ profanity leave them as they are, but it is important to ask first. For our Guide you can do one of three things.
  - i. **Only state the First Word** - I told him the f word.
  - ii. **Asterisks** - I told him, "F\*\*\*, You!"
  - iii. **Ellipses and Asterisks** - I told him, "No I'm not going to ...\*\*... do it, it's too dangerous!"