

**Baylor University
Institute for Oral History**

Style Guide:
A Quick Reference
for
Editing Oral History Transcripts

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***We would love to hear from parties that use this style guide. Please drop us a line and tell us about your transcribing project, and let us know if you have any comments, questions, or suggestions regarding the guide.**

TRANSCRIBING THE SPOKEN WORD—INTRODUCTION

Transcribing oral histories is not for the faint of heart. To beginners it seems like a straightforward task, but it doesn't take long to discover how different the spoken language is from the written language. Trying to translate the former into the latter is a messy business. Individuals bring their own background and experience to interviews and thus their own unique way of putting together words and sounds to get across what they want to say. Each interview presents a new set of challenges for the transcriber and editor. What we've compiled here are guidelines to help us keep our oral history transcripts consistent and professional looking. We want interviewees to know that we value the time they set aside for their interviews and that we take great care with their words.

Although we've done our best, no style guide can cover everything. If you don't see what you're looking for here, check with a dictionary (see the **Spelling** section below) and/or the latest edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style*, which is available for free online to all Baylor students and staff/faculty. We also have a physical copy of the latest edition of *Chicago* in the work area. If neither of these solves the matter, then ask one of the editors in the office to assist you in deciding how to type that portion so that it will make sense to the future reader and honor the interviewee's intent.

NOTE ON FORMAT

Our transcript templates have changed over the years, and these various formats can be seen by browsing our [online collections archive](#). Our latest template change occurred in 2014, when we dispensed with our two-column format and dusted off and revamped an older template that uses the classic Times New Roman font. Margins are 1 inch except for the left margin, which is slightly larger at 1.5 inches for binding purposes. We're constantly tweaking our templates, making improvements as we think of them. Let us know if you have suggestions.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Spelling

Not all dictionaries are created equal, and not all good dictionaries are the same. By policy, informed by a variety of popular and scholarly trends, the editors of every good, serious dictionary make decisions with each new edition about what words will be added, which ones will change, and which ones may be consigned to the lexical dark archives, labeled archaic. The Institute for Oral History has adopted the latest edition of *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* as its standard guide for spelling. [Merriam-Webster](#) offers an abridged version for free online. A quick Google search for a word will not yield results reliably acceptable to meet the institute's standards.

Use the spell-checking function in Microsoft Word. It is an important and useful first step in checking a transcript, and it can help alert you to words that need checking in the dictionary. However, there are many kinds of errors it does not catch, and there is no substitute for careful, thoughtful proofreading.

Use the dictionary. Do not be afraid to admit you don't know a spelling, and do not assume you do know. Before you change how a word is spelled, look it up to make sure you are right.

Check the Word List

Interviewers sometimes make word lists—lists of words and names spoken in the course of their interviews which may not be familiar to everyone, or which may be unclear on the recording. When you begin working with a new recording, look in the Notes and Correspondence file labeled with the interviewee’s name, or in the corresponding folder on the server, for a word list. Refer to the list as you transcribe or edit. Add to it as you verify words and names not on the list—but be sure your additions are correct. Add your initials to the additions, as well.

Common (and Not-So-Common) Pitfalls and Important Distinctions

Some of these words may not come up often in transcripts, but they are included here as reminders of the importance of careful attention and of referring to the dictionary even when you think you’re probably guessing right. If you are audit-checking a transcript, remember that words pronounced very similarly may have slightly different spellings and very different meanings; choose the right word, and look it up if you’re not sure. Learn to recognize when you’re not—or shouldn’t be—sure.

adverse	She was persistent and succeeded even in the most adverse circumstances.
averse	I’m not averse to going out for pizza.
all right	<i>Alright</i> is not acceptable in the institute, even though its status as an outcast is disputed by some.
all together altogether	The children were all together again for Molly’s birthday. (adverb: wholly, entirely, completely) That is altogether unfair.
here	I like it here.
hear	I can’t hear what they said on the recording.
Dr Pepper	Note there is no period in the name.
email	<i>Chicago</i> now prefers this term without a hyphen.
every day everyday	I eat lunch every day. (adjective: common) I think I’ll use my everyday dishes for the dinner party.
its	(possessive) The cat was chasing its tail.
it’s	(contraction of <i>it is</i>) It’s cold outside.
ma’am	Yes ma’am, I believe so.
onto	(preposition: to a position on; upon) Paste the label onto the top of the box. (expression: knowing what someone is doing) He’s really onto something.
on to	Let’s go on to Dallas since we’ve come this far already.
they’re	(contraction of <i>they are</i>) They’re going to play rugby in the fall.
there	(indicates location) Could you sit over there, please?
their	(possessive) The children took off their coats.
to	Are you going to school today?
too	Did you graduate from Baylor too?
	Use commas with <i>too</i> when it signals an abrupt change of thought: No one could believe that I didn’t like chocolate, but then, too, they couldn’t understand why I preferred to go to the movies alone.
	Or when it starts a sentence, as in <i>also</i> : I don’t know why I said it. Too, I don’t know why she ignored it.
the web website	For many years <i>web</i> was capitalized, but <i>Chicago</i> now considers it generic. <i>Chicago</i> now prefers <i>website</i> as one word and lowercased.

whenever	(conjunction: at whatever time; at any time when) Visit us whenever you like.
whichever	(pronoun: any one that, no matter which) Do whichever is easiest. (adjective: no matter which) Whichever task you do, do it well.
who's	(contraction of <i>who is</i> or <i>who has</i>) Who's that girl sitting over there?
whose	(pronoun, possessive of who or which) Whose umbrella is that?
yeah	Note this preferred spelling.
y'all	In some regions, an often-used contraction for <i>you-all</i> .
you-all	I hope you-all take my advice on this. (Note the hyphen.)
your	(possessive pronoun) I admire your editing skills.
you're	(contraction of <i>you are</i>) You're very good at editing.

Proofread

Proofread your transcript. Look for words that the spell-checker may have missed or that fell victim to AutoCorrect: *form* instead of *from*, *Forth Worth* instead of *Fort Worth* (and do not use *Ft. Worth*, by the way), *though* instead of *thought*, *you* instead of *your*, *troll* instead of *Victrola*, *trolls* instead of *clothes*, *Monkey* instead of *Monday* (all actual examples of spell-checker mistakes).

Check the format. Make sure that spacing and punctuation are correct. Make sure that apostrophes in front of dates go the right way (e.g. '76) and that all quotations and parentheses are closed.

Check for consistency. If you make a decision on a matter of style in cases where the rules provide no clear guidance or allow for discretion, make sure you follow that decision throughout the transcript. If you verify and correct the spelling of a name, be sure to correct every occurrence.

STYLE GUIDE

ABBREVIATIONS

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.

Governor Perry, but **Gov. Rick Perry**

Do not abbreviate:

- *okay*
- *et cetera*
- names of countries, territories, provinces, states, or counties
- *doctor* when used without an accompanying name
- *Senator*, *Judge*, *Bishop*, *General*, *Professor*, *Brother*, or any other political, academic, civic, judicial, religious, or military title when it is used alone or when it precedes a surname alone; e.g., **Professor Sloan**.
- *the Reverend* or *the Honorable*, when *the* is part of the title preceding the name; e.g., **the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.**
- books of the Bible
- names of the months and days
- terms of dimension, measurement, weight, degree, depth, et cetera:
inch, **foot**, **mile**

- parts of a book:
Chapter 3
Section A
Table 7
- word elements of addresses used in text:
Avenue, Building, North, South
except *NW, NE, SE, and SW*
- portions of company names, unless the actual company name uses an abbreviation:
Brother, Brothers, Company, Corporation, Incorporated, Limited, Railroad
- *Senior* or *Junior* when following last names:
Mr. Miller, Junior
Mr. Toland, Senior (See below for times when the abbreviations should be used.)

Do abbreviate:

- the following when they precede a given name and/or initial(s) plus surname:

Bro.	M.*	Mme*	Ms.	Sr.
Dr.	Messrs.*	Mmes*	Rev.	Sra.
Fr.	Mlle*	Mr.	Rt. Rev.	Srta.
Hon.	MM.*	Mrs.	Rt. Rev. Msgr.	Very Rev.

*Note the presence or absence of the period. For further guidance on French social titles, see *Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th edition, section 10.17.

- The word *and*, when the ampersand is part of the official name or title:
Seventh & James Baptist Church
- *Jr.* or *Sr.* after given name only or given name/initials plus surname:
(note that the comma is no longer required before *Jr.* and *Sr.*)
Robert Sr., John H. Smith Jr., T. A. Jones Sr.
- *NE, NW, SE, SW* in addresses given in text. (See *Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th edition, section 10.34, for further clarification.)
- era designations:
AD 70, 753 BC
- time designations:
a.m., p.m.
- Initials only, initialisms, acronyms, reverse acronyms
 - Celebrated persons are often referred to by a full set of initials, often without periods, that represent the full name.
JFK, LBJ, FDR
 - Agencies and various types of organizations in government, industry, and education often are referred to by acronyms or initialisms:
AFL-CIO or AF of L-CIO, AMA, IOOF, NATO, UN, USMC, USAF, USN, FDIC, SEC, SMU, Texas A&M
 - *Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th edition, Section 10.4, rule 3 provides a good rule of thumb: Use no periods with abbreviations that appear in full capitals, whether two letters or more and even if lowercase letters appear within the abbreviation:
VP, CEO, MA, MD, PhD, UK, US, RN, LA
 - *Note: To safeguard against any confusion on the part of the future reader, the first time any type of abbreviation appears in a transcript, put the full spelled-out version in brackets (see next section).
I never expected to find myself in a swamp in LA [Los Angeles].

ADDED MATERIAL—BRACKETS

Brackets [] are reserved for editors to use for words and notes not present on the recording and added to the transcript. Interview participants may add notes or clarifications as well, and these will appear between brackets in the final version of the transcript.

- They [the principal and teacher] could not agree on anything.
- Editor's notes are stylized as: [ed. note: xxxxx]
- Additions during the review phase appear as: [Smith note: xxxxx]
 - "Clarification" or "addition" can also be used in the place of "note."

ADDRESSES. See also ABBREVIATIONS; NUMBERS for formatting

Due to privacy concerns, we no longer include home addresses of interviewees in transcripts. If an interviewee/er provides that information on the recording, leave it out.

BRACKETS. See ADDED MATERIAL; see also SOUNDS IN RECORDING OTHER THAN TALKING—PARENTHESES

CAPITALIZATION. See also NAMES

- The Institute for Oral History uses a so-called "down" style of capitalization, as described in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th edition, Section 8.1.
- As a rule of thumb, when in doubt, do not capitalize. When *Chicago* or the dictionary allows for discretion or says that a class of words may be or usually is lowercased, the institute uses the lowercase form.
- Proper names of institutions, organizations, persons, places, and things follow the forms of standard English practice. When in doubt, consult the dictionary or the *Chicago* chapter on names and terms for specific cases and examples. If still in doubt, don't capitalize. Partial names of institutions, organizations, or places are usually written in lowercase.

Do capitalize:

- names of particular persons, places, organizations, historical time periods, historical events, biblical events and concepts, movements (although *Chicago* lowercases **civil rights movement**), calendar terms referring to specific days, months, and oriental years
- titles of creative works
- references to athletic, national, political, regional, religious, and social groups:
Baylor Bears, Congress, Democrats, Daughters of the American Revolution, the Masons
- *World Wide Web* (but not *web* or *website*):

Don't capitalize:

- *web, website, internet, or the net*
- *oh*, except at the beginning of a sentence or response
- incomplete titles of persons
- seasons
fall semester, spring of 2000, winter solstice
- names of dances, but do capitalize names of dancing events:
They danced the jitterbug all night long.
He invited her to the Cattle Baron's Ball.
- pronouns referring to deities:
God in his mercy kept my child safe.
There may be some occasions when this rule needs bending in deference to strongly held preferences of interview participants.

- spelled-out academic degrees
master's degree, doctorate, bachelor of arts
- branches of the military, when not preceded by the words *US* or *United States*:
My brother was in the navy, but I chose to volunteer for the army.

Capitalization examples:

Capitalize	Lowercase
Mr. So-and-So	She used a so-and-so to mix the batter.
US Air Force, US Marines	air force, marines, a marine
Baylor University Board of Regents, MCC Board of Trustees	board of regents, the board, the regents, the trustees
the University of Virginia	the university
Department of History	the history department
School of Nursing	the nursing school
course titles: History 1301, History of Texas, Microeconomics	courses: economics, history, philosophy, but French, Spanish, English
McLennan County	We lived out in the county.
City of Woodway, State of Texas, Commonwealth of Virginia	We moved to the city of Dallas. The state bird of Texas is the mockingbird.
the <i>New York Times</i>	the newspaper
regional designations: the West, the Southwest	directional terms: to travel west, to face southwest
Central Texas	the central region of Texas
an Easterner, Western American history	a western university
West Coast, Gulf Coast	the coast
Interstate 35, IH35 or I-35	the interstate, the highway
Eighth Street	the street
Bible	biblical work
Scripture(s)	scriptural passage
Veterans Administration	the university administration
Veterans Administration Hospital	a veterans hospital
the Institute for Oral History	the institute
the Texas Collection	the collection
the Word of God	the words of the song
the Fall (of Man)	the fall of 1992
the Gospel of Luke	the gospel
the Book of Daniel	a book of poetry
McLennan County Court	county court
Washington Street Bridge	the bridge
American Revolution	the revolution of the colonies
World War I, First World War	the war
the Monroe Doctrine	the doctrine
General of the Army Douglas MacArthur	MacArthur was a general in the US Army.
President Harry Truman	the president of the USA, presidency
the Bronze Age	the third of the four ages of man

Capitalize	Lowercase
the Democratic Party	the party that won in that precinct
the Democrats, the Democratic Party, the Democratic National Convention	democracy, a democratic form of government, a democratic vote
the Communist Party	communist tendencies
Great Depression (referring to 1930s), the Depression	a recession; the distinction between a recession and a depression
Sherman Antitrust Act	an act of Congress
Bro. Adam Smith, Brother Smith, Sister Jones, Father Tim	my brother Bob; Kathryn, my sister; our father Henry
Mom (substitute for given name), Grandpa Smith, Aunt Helen	my mama, his grandma and grandpa Knapik, her aunt Elizabeth
US Senate (note no periods in <i>US</i>)	Texas senate
Capitol (referring to the building)	the capital of Texas (referring to the city)
World Wide Web	internet, the net, web, website

COINED WORDS. See SPELLING PROBLEMS

COLLOQUIALISMS. See SPELLING PROBLEMS

COMMAS

No sir. (when used as an expression)
 Oh yes.
 Thanks, Mrs. Pool.
 Yeah, that's right. (Note correct spelling of *yeah*.)
 Well, I'm from California originally, see.
 Well now, that just doesn't make any sense.
 I was born, let's see, in Dallas, Texas, in 1904.
 I mean, what are you going to do about it?
 So we, you know, went back home.
 And, of course, we were pretty angry.
 She was, like, my best friend.
 Every, say, twice a month he would come by the store.
 But, I don't know, it was just a really hard time for everyone.
 They considered me a, quote, conservative.

The word *now* is a tricky case, since it can be used as an introductory expression, such as *well*, or to indicate the present time. We typically use a comma in the former sense and not the latter, in an attempt, perhaps in vain, to avoid confusion.

Now, that was a pretty stupid thing to do.
 After all this time, why are you saying that now?

Do not place a comma after a conjunction that begins the sentence.

And the committee voted in favor of the amendment.
 But the decision came as a complete surprise to Bob.

When the conjunction precedes a transitional element, use a comma before and after the transitional element or none at all.

But, in my opinion, the lamp looked better on the end table.
 And in the evening the skies darkened.

COMPOUND WORDS. See HYPHENS

CRUTCH WORDS

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. 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 response from the listener, such as: you know? see? or, understand?

- 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*. But 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*.

DASHES

The em dash is represented by one long hyphen (—) when using AutoFormatting (two hyphens, followed by a word and then a space) or Ctrl + Alt + the minus key on the number pad. It’s used in BUIOH transcripts without preceding or following spaces or punctuation to indicate:

- a hanging phrase resulting in an incomplete sentence (do not use ellipses):
DEAUX: There was this teacher who told me I’d never amount to—told me I wasn’t ever going to succeed. And the way that affected me—
- a parenthetical expression or statement:
DEAUX: I guess I was always rambunctious—a troublemaker, really—as a child.
- an interruption:
DEAUX: It was dark, and suddenly this big thing jumped out—
SMYTHE: Good grief.
DEAUX: —and started coming—
SMYTHE: After you?
DEAUX: —after me.
- a meaningful pause on the part of the speaker:
DEAUX: I really miss her—her sweet disposition. And it’s—hard to think she’s gone.

DATES. See also NUMBERS

In the heading on the first page of a transcript, type the date in month, day, year form:

January 1, 2003

Elsewhere in the transcript, the form of dates conforms to the rules for numbers:

- Use numerals for years (1996) except when a sentence begins with a year:
Nineteen sixty-two was an important year for me.
- Use numerals for days when they follow the name of the month and precede the year; follow this form even when the speaker says, “Today is August the fifth, nineteen eighty-seven.”
Today is August 5, 1987.
- Spell out the words for the day when the year is not expressed and the speaker uses the ordinal number:
My birthday is August fifth.
My birthday is August the fifth.
- Spell out the word for the day when the day precedes the month:
the fifth of August

- Other examples:
1930s; the thirties; 1989 or '90; midsixties; mid-1960s
- When spelling out 1906, use **Nineteen o-six** or **Nineteen aught-six**.
- When a date is said as a string of numbers, use numerals:
He died 12/18/1973.

DIALECT. See SPELLING PROBLEMS

DIRECT ADDRESS

Set off by commas:

I must confess, Ray, that I really love the great outdoors.

DIVISION OF WORDS AND NUMBERS. See also HYPHENS

Take care that automatic wrapping of text lines does not separate initials from a surname, parts of an acronym or abbreviation, or divisional marks—such as a), (1), (i)—from material to which they pertain. If necessary to keep these elements together, replace a normal space with a non-breaking space (Insert→Symbol→Special character in the Microsoft Word menu).

EDITORIAL NOTES. See ADDED MATERIAL

ELLIPSES

Do not use ellipses (. . .) in transcribing oral history recordings because they may suggest to readers that material has been left out.

FALSE STARTS

A false start may be anything from a syllable to a sentence fragment. Repeated words, phrases, or syllables are at times indicative of a person's thought patterns, speech patterns, or personality traits, or of a speaker's effort to emphasize an element of communication. Sometimes an interviewee may be deliberately ambiguous or turgid for reasons of his or her own. Where to draw the line in deleting false-start material from the transcript is a difficult decision. We strive to follow a middle course, leaving in enough to indicate individual speech patterns. If repetition is for emphasis as reflected in the voice of the interviewee, the repetition is always retained. Do not try to indicate stuttering unless it is intentional.

FEEDBACK WORDS AND SOUNDS

Similar to the topic of crutch words, while there is some merit in having an absolutely verbatim transcript which includes all instances of feedback (such as *um-hm*, *okay*, *yeah*, and *I see*), too many interruptions in the flow of a speaker's remarks make for tedious transcribing now and exhausting reading later. Knowing when to include feedback sounds and when to omit them calls for very careful judgment. Usually the interviewer's noises are intended to encourage the interviewee to keep talking. If every few lines of the transcript is interviewer feedback, go back and carefully evaluate the merit of each instance. Do not include it all, especially if it interrupts the interviewee's comments in midstream. Only if the feedback is in definite response to a question or point being made by the interviewee should you include it. When in doubt, ask.

Spellings of specific feedback words:

- Agreement or affirmation: **uh-huh**, **um-hm**
- Disagreement: **unh-uh**

FRACTIONS. See NUMBERS

GRADES, SCHOLASTIC

Type letter grades in capital letters with no periods following, no italics, and no quotation marks. Show number grades in Arabic numerals with no quotation marks and no following periods. The plural should be formed only by adding *s*, except where confusion with another word is possible.

I made all A's by earning 100s on all my exams, but my roommate made only Bs.

HYPHENS. See also DIVISION OF WORDS AND NUMBERS

For guidance on use of hyphens to form compound words and phrases, please refer first to sections 7.81-7.89 in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th edition, and then to the dictionary. Many words that were once hyphenated are no longer, so *Chicago* should be relied upon as the most up-to-date authority.

vice-president is now vice president

post-doctoral is now postdoctoral

When the second element is capitalized, retain the hyphen:

post-World War II

post-Civil War

Hyphenate:

- successive uses of the word *blah*:
Then everyone started talking and **blah-blah-blah**.
- to indicate division or separation in the following:
 - division of words into syllables, as in **syl-la-ble**
 - spelling out a name or words, as in **H-o-r-a-c-e**. Capitalize only where appropriate.
 - separation of numerator from denominator in a fraction expressed in words unless the numerator or the denominator is hyphenated. In that case, use / to separate numerator from denominator.
one-fifth
three/thirty-seconds
- to indicate unification or combination as follows:
 - nouns made up of two or more nouns which imply the combination or unification of two or more linked things, functions, or characteristics, as in astronaut-scientist, AFL-CIO
 - modifiers and adjectival compounds when used before the noun being modified, not after, including those formed with numbers:
a one-of-a-kind student
- to indicate an infrequent pronunciation or meaning of a word:
re-creation, recreation
re-cover, recover
re-form, reform
- to indicate different pronunciations:
Her name at that time was Plasek, P-l-a-s-e-k. "Plah-shik" or "Pla-sik."
- to indicate clear meaning when possible confusion could result from adding a prefix to a word starting with a vowel, as in **co-op**. Most often this convention operates with doubled vowels.

Do not hyphenate:

- a noun compound of a spelled-out number and prefix, as in **mid-eighties** (but do hyphenate prefix plus numerals, as in **mid-1980s**).
- chemical terms, as in **sodium nitrate**, **sodium silicate**, **bismuth oxychloride**
- a compound modifier that follows the noun it modifies unless hyphenated in *Merriam-Webster*:
She was well liked by everyone in her class.
Her argument was well-balanced.
- a compound modifier that includes an adverb ending in -ly:
wholly fictitious account

INCOMPLETE SENTENCES

Incomplete sentences are familiar occurrences in oral history because of its conversational nature. They are best ended with an em dash (—).

INFORMAL LANGUAGE. See **SPELLING PROBLEMS**

ITALICS. See **QUOTATION MARKS** for titles not in italics

Italicize:

- titles of whole published works, such as *Plain Speaking*
- titles of books, bulletins, periodicals, pamphlets
- titles of long poems
- titles of plays and motion pictures
- titles of long musical compositions: operas, operettas, musical comedies, oratorios, ballets, tone poems, concertos, sonatas, concerti grossi, symphonies, and suites, but not descriptive titles or attributed titles
- Titles—actual titles, rather than descriptive or attributed titles—of paintings, sculptures, drawings, mobiles:
You may know that da Vinci's Mona Lisa is actually *La Gioconda*.
- names of spacecraft, aircraft, and ships, except for abbreviations preceding the names, such as designations of class or manufacturer, as follows:
HMS Queen Elizabeth
USS Lexington
Friendship 7
- foreign words and phrases that are not in common currency; when in doubt, don't italicize. Consult the dictionary; don't italicize a quotation in a foreign language.
- a foreign word or phrase when followed by a translation; enclose translation in quotation marks and precede translation by a comma:
J'ai mal à la tête, "I have a headache."
- references to words as words or phrases as phrases:
SHAMMARI: My parents decided to name me Noor.
ESBER: What does *noor* mean?
SHAMMARI: It means "light" in Arabic.

- references to letters as letters
That word should have two *r*'s and only one *e*.
That's spelled with a capital *K*.
 - But don't italicize letters when they represent shapes.
The table was shaped like a *U* and the room like an *L*.
 - Also, don't italicize letters in commonly used expressions.
minding your *p*'s and *q*'s
dotting the *i*'s and crossing the *t*'s
- for emphasis (use *very* sparingly)
- in indexes, the cross-reference terms *See* and *See also*
- titles of legal cases, except in footnotes where only *ex parte*, *ex rel.*, and *in re* are italicized along with other Latin words
- enumeration letters referring to subdivisions within a sentence or within a paragraph as well as those appearing in lists, when such letters are in lowercase, such as *a*, *b*, or *c*
- newspaper names and the city names that accompany them: *New York Times*
Note: Do not italicize any articles preceding a newspaper name. Example: *the Times*.

LEGAL CASES

Italicize titles of legal cases, with *v.* for versus:

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas
the *Miranda* case

MONEY. See NUMBERS

NAMES. See also ABBREVIATIONS; CAPITALIZATION; ITALICS; QUOTATION MARKS

The spelling of proper names of persons or locations is one of the transcriber's most difficult tasks. The office has many reference works which contain names and places. Ask for help.

NEOLOGISMS. See SPELLING PROBLEMS

NUMBERS

In general, spell out whole numbers, whether cardinal or ordinal, from one to ninety-nine, and any of those numbers followed by hundred, thousand, hundred thousand, million, and so on, hyphenated or not.

sixty-nine

seventy-fifth

twenty-two hundred, but 2,367. Note: When there are several numbers in a sentence or a group of numbers includes numbers over one hundred, you may use numerals for brevity and consistency.

- Always spell out the number if it is the first word in a sentence.
When were you born? Nineteen sixty-five.
When were you born? In 1965.
- Spell out the number if it is the name of a street and under one hundred.
454 Fourth Street, Twenty-Fifth Street
- Spell out decades such as *fifties*, *sixties*, but *1960s*, *1970s*.

See also the chapter on numbers in *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

Do not spell out:

- sums of money larger than a hundred dollars. See *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th edition, section 9.24, for examples of how to format sums larger than a million dollars.
- stats
And then that year we wound up going 34 and 2.
- percentages or angles
Only 30 percent of board members approved of the measure.
Her foot was turned at a 45-degree angle.
- street address numbers, intrabuilding numbers, highway numbers
10 Downing Street, 304 Carroll Library, IH35
- telephone numbers
 - Our phone number was Plaza, which is 75—it was Plaza 36293.
- fractional sums of money above one dollar: \$2.98
- dates: See also **DATES** above
735 BC mid-1950s
AD 1066 the midfifties
1990s midfifties fashions
24 February 1997 July 1997 (no comma)
- time of day—Spell out even, half, and quarter hours. Use numerals for other fractions of time, or when a.m. or p.m. follows:
8:20 four o'clock three forty-five
6:30 p.m. seven thirty six in the morning
- number elements in names of government bodies and subdivisions of 100th and higher, including all local unions and lodges
Thirty-Sixth Infantry, 139th Tactical Wing
- parts of a book, such as chapter numbers, verse numbers
- For consistency, any sentence which contains numerals pertaining to the same category should have all numerals.
The report stated that 7 [instead of seven] out of 265 students voted in the campus elections.
Exceptions:
 - The sentence begins with a number:
Seven out of 265 students voted.
 - Numbers representing different categories:
In the past ten years five new buildings of over 125 stories were erected in the city.

Numbers as numbers:

When spoken of or referred to as numbers, they may be enclosed in quotation marks or italicized; either is acceptable, but be consistent throughout the transcript.

Plurals of numbers:

- Spelled-out numbers form plurals like any other noun:
the twenties and thirties
- Numerals form plurals by adding *s* alone, with no apostrophe:
1920s and 1930s
- When connecting figures with a prefix or suffix, add the hyphen in the appropriate place if the compound word is adjectival. Connect numbers expressed in words to a prefix or suffix with a hyphen:
twenty-odd
The suffix *fold* is an exception:
threefold

PAGE NUMBERS

Lowercase Roman numerals are used on front matter preceding the main text. The title page is considered to be page i but is not marked.

For text, appendix, and index pages, page numbers (in Arabic figures) appear on the lower right of each page. Number appendix and index in sequence with the text pages and place the appendix pages between the end of the text and the index.

PARAGRAPHS

Press the [ENTER] key to start a new paragraph wherever topics change, where subtopics are introduced, or where other dialogue is introduced. This may be very difficult to judge as you are transcribing from the recording and is often left up to the audit-checker and/or final editor.

PARENTHESES. See SOUNDS IN RECORDING OTHER THAN TALKING—PARENTHESES

PLURALS. See also NUMBERS

- Compound words formed with prepositions are pluralized by forming the plurals of the first nouns in the compounds:
fathers-in-law
- Capital letters of the alphabet are pluralized by adding *s* or *'s*:
Zs
Use the apostrophe only where confusion is possible:
A's, not *As*
Lowercase letters form the plural by adding *'s*:
p's and q's
- Foreign words are made plural, unless Americanized, according to the customs proper to the particular languages. For example, in Hebrew, the plural of *Kibbutz* is formed by adding *im*:
Kibbutzim.
- Abbreviations are pluralized by adding *s* when in the form of acronyms, initialisms, or reverse acronyms without periods
GREs
When periods are used, add an apostrophe:
B. K.'s
- Proper nouns: In most cases, add an *s* to the singular:
six King Georges
Add *es* to the singular form if the word ends in *s* or *z*:
six King Charleses, the Martinezes
More examples:
The three Loises are friends with the three Marys.
The hall was full of Joneses and Martins.
Note that the apostrophe is *never* used to denote the plural of a personal name.

POSSESSIVES

- Follow the standard rules for possessives.
- For proper nouns, add *'s* to most, even those ending with an *s*:
Charlie's, Frances's
However:
Jesus' and Moses'
- For plural possessives, the apostrophe goes at the end:
The Smiths' and Reynoldses' fortunes were lost in the Depression.

We're planning on going to the boys' basketball game tonight.
Collective nouns are exceptions:
children's toys, women's clothes

PROFANITY

Type exactly as said. Do not abbreviate or alter the words.

- Stylize this phrase this way: **the n word**

PUNCTUATION. See also DASHES; HYPHENS; QUOTATION MARKS

Transcript punctuation follows *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th edition.

QUOTATION MARKS

- When a direct expression is spoken by one person (I, he, she), set apart the expression with commas, use opening and closing quotation marks, and capitalize the first letter of the first word quoted.
She said, "I am going to graduate in May."
- When a direct expression is spoken by more than one person (we, they), do not use quotation marks, but do set apart the expression with commas and do capitalize the first letter of the first word quoted.
They said, What are you doing here?
- When a thought is quoted, do not use quotation marks, but do set the thought apart by commas and capitalize the first letter of the first word quoted.
I thought, Where am I?
- *Note: When a person repeatedly breaks up recreated dialogue, whether internal or external, with phrases such as *I said, she said, I told him, I thought*, etc., it is permissible to leave some of them out. Compare these two versions of the same passage:
I said, "I don't think so." I said, "I'm done." I said, "I'm just waiting to retire."
I said, "I don't think so. I'm done. I'm just waiting to retire."
- When a specific word or phrase said during the interview is referred to, enclose it in quotation marks, unless doing so adds confusion or unintended meaning to the passage:
When did you retire? I shouldn't say "retire," but when did you stop full-time pastoring?
- Enclose in quotation marks when text refers to
 - titles of articles in periodicals
 - book chapter titles
 - book divisions other than chapter titles: sections, paragraphs, charts, and other labeled book parts
 - dissertation titles
 - essay titles
 - newspaper headlines (in all capital letters)
 - poems (short, not book length)
 - radio program titles
 - sermon titles
 - short musical composition titles when not designated by number
 - song titles
 - short story titles
 - television program titles
 - theses (unpublished)
 - lecture titles
 - titles of formal courses of study
 - debate topics

Use single quotes for titles or quotes within titles or quotes:

- He said, “Get that Benny Bolton record of ‘South.’”

Do not enclose in quotation marks

- thoughts or paraphrases:
I thought to myself, Who does she think she is?
- the word *yes* or the word *no* other than in a sentence which includes other direct discourse:
He couldn't say no, yet he didn't really want to say yes.
She said, “No,” when asked, “Do you care to join us?”
- names used in conjunction with the words *called*, *named*, or words with similar meanings:
We named the dog Bowser.
My father never called me Junior. He had a nickname, Rabbit, and called me Rabbit or Rab.
- words following the word *called* or *named*, unless they're not found in the dictionary:
Before refrigerators we had something called an icebox.
At that time they called it “hand-searching.” Now they call it noodling.
- words following the phrase *so-called*, whether meant in irony or not, unless they're not found in the dictionary or are used in nontraditional ways:
That person will get the benefit of the so-called law first.
We found out we had been transferred from being so-called combat troops to service troops.
The Institute for Oral History uses a so-called “down” style of capitalization.
- words and phrases following *quote* and *unquote*, unless they're in reference to discourse or are not found in the dictionary:
I was a, quote, moderate.
She said, quote, unquote, “Well, I respect your opinion, but I think you're wrong.”

Punctuation with quotation marks:

- The period and the comma always stay inside the quotation marks.
“I'm ready for lunch,” she said, “but it's only ten o'clock.”
- The semicolon and the colon always stay outside the quotations.
With trepidation, she scanned “The Raven”; it was too eerie for her tastes.
- The em dash, exclamation mark, and question mark are within the quotation marks when they apply only to the quotation.
She began to say, “In the spring of 1920—” and then remembered it was a year later.
She began by saying, “In the spring of 1920,”—I think it was really 1921—“I graduated from Baylor and began teaching school.”

RECORDING TRANSITIONS

- breaks in digitized recordings:
pause in recording as cassette tape 1, side 1 ends
- a pause in recording, when recorder is turned off and then on again, when sound fades out, et cetera:
pause in recording
- the end of the interview:
end of interview

REFERENCE WORKS

The office has a good supply of reference books on many subjects. It's a good idea to ask what sources are available before you begin a transcribing project. For stylistic purposes, consult the dictionary and *The Chicago Manual of Style*; if the two conflict, try to follow *Chicago*.

RELIGIOUS NAMES AND TERMS

The institute prefers a “down” style of capitalization for religious names and terms.

For a complete guide to capitalization of religious terms, the names of deities and religious groups, movements, organizations, and religious writings, see *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th edition, sections 8.91-8.111.

SLANG. See SPELLING PROBLEMS

SOUNDS IN RECORDING OTHER THAN TALKING—PARENTHESES

Nonverbal sounds or events which occur in the recording are noted and enclosed in parentheses, especially if they intrude significantly or affect the intelligibility of the recording and certainly if they provoke a response from those present. For such notations, use no capital letters, unless for proper nouns or proper adjectives, and no ending punctuation. When these occur at the end of a sentence or a clause, position them after the punctuation. Reserve the use of parentheses for such activity notes.

- Descriptive terms:
(laughs) when speaker laughs
(Jones laughs) when person other than speaker laughs
(laughter) or (both laugh) when more than one participant laughs
(unintelligible)
(telephone rings)
(knock at the door)
- Avoid editorializing. Use (both talking at once) or (speaking at same time)—NOT (interrupts); use (laughs)—NOT (laughs rudely), (giggles), (chuckles), (snickers), (guffaws), (snorts derisively).

SPACING

- one space after a period and after a colon
- one space between words and before and after parentheses in the middle of a sentence
- no space before or after em dashes (—)
- one space between initials in a name (e.g. J. F. Kennedy)
- When something has been italicized, it may look as though there is no space before or after the italicized text. To verify spaces, click on the Show/Hide button in Word under the Home tab. The button looks like a paragraph mark and will turn on formatting markings.

SPELLED-OUT WORDS

- When a speaker spells a word, capitalize appropriately and separate letters with hyphens:
B-a-y-l-o-r
- Follow the exact words of the speaker:
They called him Screech, spelled capital S-c-r-double e-c-h.

SPELLING PROBLEMS. See also ABBREVIATIONS; CAPITALIZATION; DIVISION; HYPHENS; NUMBERS

- Always use the word processing software’s spell-check function before printing and always look up a word if you are not completely sure of its spelling. When the dictionary allows more than one spelling of a word, choose the first one listed.

DO	DON'T
because for a while	'cause for awhile
awhile ago	a while ago
all right	alright
until, till	'til
nother (as in, “What she thought about it was a whole nother thing.”) nowadays	Since <i>nother</i> is in the dictionary, don’t change it to <i>another</i> or <i>other</i> . now-a-days
apiece	a piece
inasmuch as	in as much as
insofar as	in so far as
Channel 10	Channel Ten
a lot	alot
et cetera	etc.
okay	O.K. or OK

- Always check the interview files to locate a word list for each recording. Interviewers may make lists to accompany the recording; using the lists saves time and results in a more accurate transcript. Please include the word list with the transcript when passing it on to the audit-checker or the final editor.
- Spellings for slang and certain words and expressions pronounced in regional dialect are available in dictionaries or reference works in the office. Words of informal language, such as *yeah* and *yep*, may be transcribed verbatim if they occur in the dictionary. Words commonly pronounced together in spoken English—such as *gonna* (**going to**), *wanna* (**want to**), *shoul***da** (**should have**), *coul***da** (**could have**), *woul***da** (**would have**), *sorta* (**sort of**), and *kinda* (**kind of**)—are in the unabridged dictionary, but we prefer to spell these out. Very few people pronounce every syllable and letter in every word they say, and we have to draw the line somewhere of how literal to be when transcribing; otherwise it’s a slippery slope and frustration sets in. We find that interviewees often edit out words such as *gonna* and *sorta* anyway.
 - In the same vein, we type “’cause” as “because” but leave uses of “course” (shortened version of “of course”) as is.
- Interviewees occasionally coin words, either humorously or to convey a meaning for which they cannot find an existing word. If you cannot find a word in any dictionary but can hear it clearly and can devise a reasonable spelling for it, transcribe it and place it in quotation marks the first time it occurs. Do not use quotation marks for every occurrence of the coined word, however, as it makes for tedious reading.

TAPE BREAKS. See RECORDING TRANSITIONS

TRACK CHANGES

While track changes can prove to be an extremely helpful tool in Microsoft Word, proceed with caution when using it since all of our transcripts are made available online. Before creating a PDF to upload to our online database, scroll through the document and make sure that Track Changes is turned off and that the correct “markup” version of the transcript is displayed. If a red vertical line appears in the margin, select “no markup” from the dropdown box to temporarily display what the transcript should look like, with all changes incorporated. If needed, visit [this Microsoft Office webpage](#) for further instructions.

TITLES. See ABBREVIATIONS; ITALICS; NAMES; QUOTATION MARKS

UNINTELLIGIBLE SPOTS IN RECORDING

- When speech on a recording is unintelligible, first play it at a higher volume and/or slower speed. Next, ask someone else to listen. Don’t struggle alone. If the interviewer is one of the BUIOH faculty, ask her or him for help.
- If you can make an educated guess, type the closest possible approximation of what you hear, underline the questionable portion, and add two question marks in parentheses.
I went to school in Maryville(??) or Maryfield(??).
- If you and those you consult cannot make a guess as to what is said, leave a blank line of the approximate length of the unknown portion and two question marks in parentheses.
We’d take our cotton to Mr. _____(??)’s gin in Cameron.
At every city council meeting, she always asked _____(??).
- If a speaker lowers his or her voice, turns away from the microphone, or speaks over another person, it may be necessary to declare that portion of recording unintelligible.
When he’d say that, we’d—(laughs; unintelligible).

WORD LISTS

Interviewers sometimes make word lists—lists of words and names spoken in the course of their interviews which may not be familiar to everyone. When you begin working with a new recording, look in the interviewee’s Notes and Correspondence file for a word list and use it as you transcribe or edit. Add to it as you verify other words and names.