

Good Dictation Protocol

How to gain speed and consistency while reducing errors and aggravation

Developing good dictation habits can greatly reduce errors saving both time and money. Often it is the little changes in the way one dictates that have the most impact on the audibility of the record and the quality of the resulting transcription. Following are a few tips on how you can improve your dictation technique.

A. Speech Technique

1) **Speak at an even, steady, normal pace.** While this one may seem obvious, it is worth stating. An increase in pace over the course of the dictation is a primary complaint of transcriptionists. When talking into a microphone, we tend to pick up speed and words start running together. You do not have to speak abnormally slow. Simply stay calm and maintain a normal speaking pace and focus on announcing each word.

2) **Do not tail off** at the end of your sentences. Try calling out the punctuation at the end of each sentence. This serves not only as a queue for the transcriptionist but it often helps you end the sentence with a strong voice.

3) **Spell out proper names** the first time they are spoken. This includes the names of people, institutions, and geographical locations. Learning the “International Alphabet” can pay off here, as well as when speaking on cell phones or playing James Bond with the kids.

A - Alpha	F - Foxtrot	K - Kilo	P - Papa	U - Uniform
B - Bravo	G - Golf	L - Lima	Q - Quebec	V - Victor
C - Charlie	H - Hotel	M - Mike	R -Romeo	W - Whiskey
D- Delta	I - India	N - November	S - Sierra	X – X-Ray
E - Echo	J - Juliet	O - Oscar	T - Tango	Y - Yankee
				Z - Zulu

3) **Call out the Beginnings and Ends.** Calling out the beginning and ends of paragraphs, sections, records helps you get back what you expected. Identify yourself at the beginning of the dictation and state the name or ID # of the record. Most digital recording devices provide a button for starting a new record as a new file. Become familiar and make use of this feature.

Common punctuation and formatting guides to call out

Full Stop (period)	Comma	Exclamation	Hyphen	Double Hyphen
Colon	Open Parenthesis	Close Parenthesis	Open Quotation	Close Quotation
Question Mark	Dash Dash Dash	New Paragraph	New Section	New Record

4) **Call out Numbers:** Many numbers sound alike, as is the case with fifteen and fifty. After calling out the number, state the digits.

Example: 15 would be dictated as “fifteen, that is one five”

Many ID numbers are a mix of numbers and letters. It is good to call out letters using the International Alphabet and pause between sets of letters and numbers.

Example: ID Number: XYX44934WWH128 should be read as follows:

X-Ray Yankee X-Ray (pause) 44934 (pause) Whiskey Whiskey Hotel (pause) 128

B. Recording Equipment Technique

Know your recording equipment.

Recording equipment has made great strides over the last decade. Today’s small, handheld digital recording devices deliver tremendous control and fidelity when used properly. If you are using a device that is more than five year old, it is time to upgrade.

Take the time to learn how to use your recording device.

- Where is the microphone? What is the recommended recording distance from the sound source?
- How do you pause, restart, rewind, record over sections, etc.?
- How does the index marking work?
- Make some test dictations in the same environment in which you plan on dictating and listen to the recordings. Is it clear? Check for excessive background noise.
- Before you start your dictation
 - Check how much recording time is left in memory
 - Check the battery level

Become familiar with the location of the various control buttons on your device. As devices have become smaller, the problem of inadvertently hitting buttons has been on the rise.

Many of the new devices double as MP3 players. Prior to uploading your latest dictation files and sending them to your transcription partner, make sure you are not uploading the Beatles White Album.

I hope you find these dictation tips helpful.

May your dictation be clear and your transcription error free.