

Kenyon College



Oral History Transcription Guide

Last edited 2/22/18

The most important thing when formatting transcripts is to be consistent. Below are the guidelines that the Library has developed over the course of multiple oral history projects.

Document Type: .docx. If you do not have access to Microsoft Word, create as a Google Doc, and export as a .docx.

File Name: Name of the person being interviewed, without spaces. Ex.: JohnSmith.docx

Font: Times New Roman, 12

Spacing: Single, two spaces between each person speaking

Metadata: At the beginning of each interview, write the following information:

Project Name

Interviewee Name(s)

Interviewer Name(s)

Month, Day, Year

Location

Example:

Carolina Connections

Reverend Joseph Bryant

Deborah Owden, Porsha Morgan

July 17th, 2011

Penn Center, Saint Helena Island, SC

If any of this information is not available, use whatever information is available.\

If someone is not identified, call them Unknown. If you don't know the names of multiple people, call them Unknown 1, Unknown 2, etc. For example:

Unknown: So I'm here with Jane Doe, interviewing for the Carolina Connections.

Write the initials of whoever is speaking, not the name, like this:

JS: Hi, I'm John Smith, and I'm interviewing Joseph Bryant on May 10th, 2015. Could you tell me a little bit about yourself, Mr. Bryant?

JB: Well, I grew up on St. Helena...

Don't use quotation marks unless appropriate. Ex.

NOT JB: "Well, I grew up on St. Helena..."

YES JB: Well, I grew up on St. Helena

When someone laughs, coughs, or does a significant hand gesture like pointing, write it as (laughs), (coughs), (waves), etc. These can be integrated into the sentence, and include their own punctuation. If the expression comes at the beginning of the sentence, capitalize it within the parentheses. Ex.

JB: (Laughs) well, I grew up on St. Helena...

In addition, you can integrate other people laughing in response to a joke like this:

JB: And then, I hadn't even realized they were fire ants (DJ and DO laugh).

or

JB: And then, I hadn't even realized they were fire ants (everyone laughs)!

Singing should be in *italics*. Optionally, you can find the notes of the song and write them in a column next to the lyrics. Ex:

<i>Mary Had a Little Lamb,</i>	<i>ED C D EE E</i>
<i>Little Lamb,</i>	<i>DD D</i>
<i>Little Lamb</i>	<i>EG G</i>

If there are multiple clips in a video, this should be denoted in the transcript. Noticeable clips occur when files are not merged properly, or parts of the interview are missing. At the end of a clip, write **[End clip 2]**. At the beginning of a new clip, write **[Begin clip 3]**. Do not write **[Begin clip 1]** at the beginning of the interview. Put them two lines down from the end or beginning of speech, like this:

[End clip 2]

[Begin clip 3]

If a clip ends before someone has finished their sentence, write it out like this:

JB: Well, I grew up on St. Helena...

[End clip 1]

[Begin clip 2]

JB: ...and I've lived here for 75 years.

Notes can be included in the transcript by the transcriber. For example, if someone calls something by the wrong name or uses the wrong date, include it in a note. Do this in square brackets. For example:

JB: I used to hang around by Seabreeze road [Note: probably referring to Seaside Road, on the west side of St. Helena].

You can also write [Note: unclear] if you cannot understand what someone is saying, but this option should only be used as a last resort.

Do not put quotes around what sounds like vernacular English. Just write out the word as it is said. If the meaning is unclear, you can include a note.

If you're unsure about names or words, try searching for them online. This can eliminate a lot of [Note: unclear]s.

You don't need to write out every "um" and "uh" in a video. Just write them out if they have meaning in the context they are in.

Dates should be written as numbers rather than words, for example:

1997 NOT nineteen ninety-seven

We are always looking to improve our documentation. If you have questions that are not addressed in this document, or feedback on our guidelines, please contact Jenna Nolt, Digital Initiatives Librarian: noltj@kenyon.edu, 740-427-5698.