

Úna Gan A Gúna
Irish Women's Oral History Collective

Interview Transcript Style Guide¹

¹ With acknowledgements and credit to the Baylor University Institute for Oral History Style Guide (Waco, 2018).

General Guidelines

Abbreviations

In general, avoid using abbreviations in oral history transcripts. However, there are the following exceptions:

- Titles may be abbreviated when used with an accompanying name
The doctor went to the shops. Dr Jones went to the shops.
- Era designations
AD 70, 753 BC
- Time designations
am / pm
- The word “and” when the ampersand is part of an official name or title
Seventh & James Baptist Church

Initialisms and acronyms

- Celebrated persons are often referred to by a full set of initials, often without full-stops, that represent the full name
JFK, LBJ, FDR
- Agencies and various types of organisations in government, industry, and education often are referred to by acronyms or initialisms
CIA, NATO, UN
- Do not use full-stops with abbreviations that appear in full capitals
CEO, MA, PhD, UK, USA
- 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 version in square brackets.
I never expected to find myself in a swamp in LA [Los Angeles].

Added Material – Brackets

Square brackets are used by editors for words and notes not present on the recording but added to the transcript. Interview participants may add notes or clarifications as well, these will appear between brackets in the final version of the transcript.

- **They [the manager and supervisor] could not agree on anything.**
- Editor’s notes are styled: **[ed. note: xxx]**
- Participant’s notes are styled: **[Smith note: xxx]**
- Square brackets may also be used to record non-verbal communication such as laughter or pauses
[Laughs], [Pause]

Capitalisation

Proper names of institutions, organisations, persons, places, and things follow the forms of standard English practice. When in doubt, consult the dictionary. If still in doubt, don’t capitalise. Partial names of institutions, organisations, or places are usually written in lowercase.

Do capitalise:

- Names of particular persons, places, organisations, historical time periods, historical events, biblical events and concepts, movements, calendar terms referring to specific days, months, and years
- Titles of creative works
- References to athletic, national, political, regional, religious, and social groups
Oireachtas, Fine Gael, the Masons
- **World Wide Web** (but not **web** or **website**)

Do not capitalise:

- **web, website, internet, or the net**
- **oh** - except at the beginning of a sentence or response
- Incomplete titles of persons
- Seasons
autumn term, spring of 2000, winter solstice
- Names of dances but do capitalise 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.
- Spelled-out academic degrees
master's degree, doctorate, bachelor of arts
- Branches of the military, when not preceded by those belonging to a specific country
**My brother was in the navy, but I chose to volunteer for the army.
The Irish Army.**

Commas

- The word "**now**" 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.
**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 favour 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.
- Other:
 - **No sir.** (when used as an expression)
 - **Oh yes.**
 - **Thanks, Mrs. Pool.**
 - **Yeah, that's right. 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.

Crutch words

Including every word and sound uttered during the interview makes for incredibly time-consuming transcribing and the product much slower reading. 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?” “understand?” The most common word used as a crutch word is “uh”.

When “uh” is used by the narrator before speech then type “uh”. Do not record “uh” or “um” if the transcript would change speaker just to note those utterances, run the text on.

Spellings of specific crutch words:

- Um
- Uh
- Ehm

Dashes

The em dash is represented by one long hyphen (—). It can be used without preceding or following spaces or punctuation to indicate:

- A hanging phrase resulting in an incomplete sentence (do not use ellipses):
Joe: 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:
Joe: I guess I was always rambunctious—a troublemaker, really—as a child.
- An interruption:
Joe: It was dark, and suddenly this big thing jumped out—
Mary: Good grief.
Joe: —and started coming—
Mary: After you?
Joe: —after me.
- A meaningful pause on the part of the speaker:
Joe: I really miss her—her sweet disposition. And it's—hard to think she's gone.

Dates

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

- Use numerals for years
1996
- Use numerals for days when they precede the name of the month and year; follow this form even when the speaker says: “Today is August the fifth, nineteen eighty-seven.”

Today is 5 August 1987.
My birthday is on 5th August..

- 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, mid-sixties, mid-1960s
- When spelling out a year use numerals:
1906
- When a date is said as a string of numbers, use numerals:
He died 12/18/1973.

Ellipses

Do not use ellipses “...” in transcribing recordings because they may suggest to readers that material has been left out.

Feedback words and sounds

Similar to the topic of crutch words, while there is some merit in having a verbatim transcript which includes all instances of feedback, too many interruptions in the flow of speech and make for tedious transcribing and reading. Usually, the interviewer's noises are intended to encourage the interviewee to keep talking. Do not include these noises. Only if the feedback is in definite response to a question or point being made by the interviewee should you include it. Where the feedback sound precedes speech that runs on, these may be included.

Sam: We got locked out and had to sleep in the shed.

Claire: Um-hm. That must have been cold.

Spellings of specific feedback words:

- Agreement or affirmation: Mm, mmhm
- Disagreement: Unh-uh

Academic grades

Type letter grades in capital letters with no full-stops following, no italics, and no quotation marks. Show number grades in 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

Hyphenate:

- To indicate division or separation in the following:
 - Division of words into syllables
Syl-la-ble
 - Spelling out a name or words
H-o-r-a-c-e
 - 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
One/thirty-sixth

- To indicate unification or combination as follows:
 - Two or more linked things, functions, or characteristics
Astronaut-scientist
 - 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.

Do not hyphenate:

- A noun compound of a spelled-out number and prefix
Mideighties (but do hyphenate prefix plus numerals *mid-1980s*)
- Chemical terms
Sodium nitrate, sodium silicate, bismuth oxychloride

Incomplete sentences

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

Italics

Italicise:

- Titles of whole published works: books, bulletins, periodicals, pamphlets, poems, plays, films, musical compositions
- Titles of paintings, sculptures, drawings
- 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.
- Don't italicise a full quotation in a foreign language.
- A foreign word or phrase when followed by a translation; enclose translation in quotation marks and precede the 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.
- For emphasis
Use very sparingly.

- Titles of legal cases
- Newspaper names and the city names that accompany them
New York Times (but do not italicise any articles preceding a newspaper name **the Times**)

Do not italicise:

- Letters when they represent shapes.
The table was shaped like a U and the room like an L.
- Letters in commonly used expressions.
Minding your p's and q's.
Dotting the i's and crossing the t's.

Numbers

Spell out:

- Whole numbers, from one to ninety-nine, and any of those numbers followed by hundred, thousand, hundred thousand, million, and so on.
Sixty-nine
Seventy-fifth
Twenty-two hundred, but **2,367**. (When there are several numbers in a sentence or a group of numbers includes numbers over one hundred, use numerals for brevity and consistency.)
- Numbers at the start of a sentence. When were you born?
Nineteen sixty-five.
When were you born? In 1965.
- Decades
Fifties, sixties (but **1960s, 1970s**)

Do not spell out:

- Sums of money larger than a hundred pounds.
- 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, motorway numbers
10 Downing Street, 304 Carroll Library, M7
- Telephone numbers
Our phone number was Plaza, it was Plaza 36293.
- Fractional sums of money larger than one pound
£2.98
- 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 a.m. **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
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.

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

For text, appendix, and index pages, page numbers (in Arabic figures) appear on the lower right of each page.

Plurals

- Compound words formed with prepositions are pluralised by forming the plurals of the first nouns in the compounds
Fathers-in-law, attorneys-general
- Capital letters of the alphabet are pluralised 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, 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 pluralised by adding s when in the form of acronyms, initialisms, or reverse acronyms without full-stops.
GREs
- When full-stops 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
The three Loises are friends with the three Marys.

The hall was full of Joneses and Martins (The apostrophe is never used to denote the plural of a personal name.)

Possessives

- For proper nouns, add 's to most, even those ending with an s:
Charlie's, Frances's (but 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

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 capitalise 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 capitalise 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 capitalise the first letter of the first word quoted.
I thought, Where am I?
- 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:
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 labelled book parts
 - Dissertation and theses titles
 - Essay titles
 - Newspaper headlines
 - Poems
 - Radio and television programme titles
 - Sermon titles
 - Short musical composition titles when not designated by number
 - Song titles
 - Short story titles

- 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 are 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 are not found in the dictionary or are used in non-traditional 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.
- Words and phrases following quote and unquote, unless they are in reference to discourse:
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 full-stop 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

- A pause in recording, when recorder is turned off and on again, when sound fades out
"Pause in recording"
- The end of the interview
"End of interview"

Other sounds

Non-verbal sounds or events which occur in the recording are noted and enclosed in square brackets. 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]
- Avoid editorialising
Use [both talking at once], not [interrupts]
Use [laughs], not [giggles], [chuckles]

Spacing

- Single space after a full-stop and after a colon
- No space before or after em dashes (—)
- Single space between initials in a name
J. F. Kennedy

Spelled-out words

- When a speaker spells a word, capitalise 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

Do	Don't
Because	'cause
For a while	For awhile
All right	Alright
Until, 'til	Till
Nowadays	Now-a-days
Apiece	A piece
Inasmuch as	In so far as
Insofar as	In so far as
A lot	Alot
Et cetera	Etc.
Okay	O.K. OK

- Words of informal language, such as **yeah** and **yep**, may be transcribed verbatim.
- Spell out words that are commonly pronounced together in spoken English, rather than transcribing them verbatim:
gonna (**going to**), wanna (**want to**), shoulda (**should have**), coulda (**could have**), woulda (**would have**), sorta (**sort of**), and kinda (**kind of**)
- Interviewees occasionally coin words, either humorously or to convey a meaning for which they cannot find an existing word., transcribe it and place it in quotation marks the first time it occurs but do not use quotation marks for every occurrence of the coined word.

Timecodes

When transcribing, aim to note the timecode of the recording in the text at approximately five-minute intervals.

[05:00] [10:00] [15:00]

Unintelligible recording

- If you 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 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].