

HANDY HINTS – DICTATION

1. Know your equipment

Take the time to get to know your recording equipment, how it works and how to maintain it. Some people even go as far as giving their dictaphone a name, whether you choose to do this is up to you! Ensure you are aware of where all the buttons are located. If you are unsure, refer to your user manual.

2. Organisation

Before you start your dictation, organise yourself. Assemble any papers, reports or information you may need before you start dictating, this ensures that you have everything you need to hand and helps maintain your concentration.

3. STOP!

When dictating, if you need to find a file or a piece of information, Stop the Dictaphone! If you don't do this the typist will have to sit there listening to somebody rustle through papers, and in some cases mumble obscenities to themselves whilst trying to find the information required. Although this is usually highly amusing to the typist, remember, you pay per digital minute, and if you spend 4 minutes looking for something with your recorder on, that will be 4 wasted digital minutes you will need to pay for as the typist will need to spend those 4 minutes listening and waiting for you to start dictating again.

4. Hungry? Take a break!

Please DO NOT eat, drink or chew gum whilst dictating. It is very common for people to work through lunch and dictate whilst eating. Apart from distorting the dictation this can also be very annoying and not particularly nice for the typist who has to listen to the sound of chewing/gulping. If you feel hungry or thirsty, take a break! You may even find that it isn't just your dictation improves, but also your health as it has been proven that regular breaks aid the reduction of stress!

5. Pronunciation

Try to speak clearly and at a regular pace, spelling any difficult and unusual words, and remember, if you can't pronounce it, we can't spell it!

6. Distractions

Make sure you are in a quiet area so your dictation can be heard clearly by the typist, background noise can be distracting and can also distort words when recording, increasing the risk of errors. A quiet area will also help you maintain your concentration during dictation.

7. Identify yourself

Say hello and identify yourself at the beginning of your dictation and state what type of dictation you are doing, i.e. style of report and the date you want reflected throughout. This will help the typist open the correct template if necessary, saving time.

8. Who?

When dictating a letter always state the recipient's full name and mailing address as clearly as possible, and spell any unusual street and town names. Also spell ambiguous words as you may mean 'Maine Street' and the typist may type 'Main Street'.

9. Consistency

When dictating try to use the same phrases and layout for all your letters and reports. If you are consistent, this aids the typist and helps to minimise errors

10. ..ting yourself off

Once you have started your recorder, pause for a moment before dictating, and when you have finished speaking, allow the recording to continue for a second, this will help to ensure that none of your dictation has been clipped off.

11. Muffled tones

Speak with your mouth at the recommended distance from your particular brand of dictation equipment for optimum sound levels. (Refer to the user manual) If you are too close, your dictation can seem muffled and if you are too far, the dictation is too quiet and if you vary between the two, this can deafen the typist and is very uncomfortable.

12. Counting sheep

Try not to speak in a monotonous tone, this can send the typist to sleep!!

13. Punctuation

Try to be aware of punctuation, say the words 'comma' 'full stop' 'new paragraph' 'question mark' etc. This will ensure that your document is easy to read and minimises editing later on.

14. Show me the money

Before you dictate figures if it is currency state the currency first just before you dictate the amount. This way we can put the symbol on before we type the figure. i.e. pound two thousand as opposed to two thousand pounds.

15. Servicing

Try to remember to have your dictation equipment serviced at least yearly. This will ensure that your equipment stays in good condition and that all recordings are clear.

16. Oops...

Try not to make errors and then say "strike that" or something to that effect, most digital recorders have a 'cue and review' button which will enable you to delete the mistake and record over it, this will keep tape lengths to a minimum. Some dictaphones also have an insert feature – learn how to use this you will find it invaluable.

17. Don't dictate and drive

DO NOT dictate while driving. It is dangerous and the sound quality is usually poor.

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18. Breathe

Its not a race, try and breathe between sentences, you may pride yourself in being able to fit 10 mins of dictation into two mins of tape. However this means it takes much longer to type and the error rate is far higher.

19. Do try this at home

If you get the time, borrow a colleague's dictated tape and sit down and spend just one single hour trying to transcribe his/her dictation. We absolutely guarantee it will be an eye-opener.

20. The end

When you have completed the tape, please let us know, you could say 'end of dictation' this way we will know that the tape has finished and does not lead onto another tape.