

KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL REALTIME EXPERIENCE

We may be quiet over there, but we are working very hard! The keys to a near-perfect realtime transcript involve many factors. What follows is the TRANSCRIPT acronym of tips to keep in mind that will help the reporter achieve seamless accuracy and transcription of your realtime transcript.

T TERMINOLOGY

This is probably the biggest challenge reporters face. In the beginning of your transcript, you may very well see words appearing wrong or not translating properly. That is because the reporter, often new to the case, is not familiar with case-specific terminology that you may be very familiar with. They will write the word as they hear it and will “flag” it with a demarcation of some sort to alert them to come back and find the proper spelling of the word. Providing spelling and terminology in advance will greatly help the translation.

R RATE OF SPEAKING

Imagine the reporter performing the task of a gerbil running in its wheel. The faster and longer it runs, the sooner it tires. The reporter has to write faster when people speak faster. When this prolonged fast rate of speech continues, the reporter tires faster and hands can begin to cramp. Misstrokes and drops may occur. Please keep in mind how fast you are talking and try not to interrupt one another. Simultaneous speaking doubles and/or triples a reporter’s takedown speed.

A AUDIBILITY

Reporters really don’t want to interrupt the proceedings. But once in a while, if we absolutely cannot hear a speaker, we may interrupt and ask for clarification. We do our best to remain quiet, but please bear with us if we find that we have to interrupt. It is to your benefit in the long run, as we are trying to preserve the integrity of your transcript. In an attempt to minimize interruptions, the reporter may use a flag that looks like [au] in the transcript to mark where the reporter needs to listen to the audio file to verify what someone said. Steno reporters write extremely fast on the machine (upwards of 265 wpm), but even the fastest reporters cannot create a perfect transcript if they cannot properly hear the proceedings.

N NONSENSICAL STROKES

There are a multitude of reasons for “untrans” and/or word groups in a transcript that make no sense. Reporters write phonetically what they hear. For example, dactylonomy may appear as dak tee lawn me. The reporter is writing phonetically at that point and will later redefine those strokes to be spelled correctly. The [fix] flag may be seen here, as a reminder for the reporter to insert the proper spelling.

S STOP

Reporters cannot write and do something else at the same time because their hands stay on the keyboard when the proceedings continue. So if you see the reporter marking an exhibit or reading back testimony — anything that takes her hands off the machine — stop for a second before resuming the proceedings so she may prepare to write again.

C COLLOQUY AND CONVERSATIONS

We cannot guess as to whether a conversation is off the record or not. Often, assuming can lead to the wrong conclusion. Please let us know if you wish to go off the record and inform us when you are going back on the record. What you may have said under your breath will still need to go on the record. Both parties have to agree to go off the record before the reporter will stop writing.

R REALTIME IS REAL TIME

That means that the reporter is writing in the moment and cannot see ahead as to how you intend to phrase your sentence. For example: If you begin saying, “I would like for you to ...,” then the reporter most likely will write that in a question format, assuming you are speaking to the witness. But if you said, “I would like for you to state your objections clearly,” that was a statement meant for another attorney. So now you have a colloquy statement that is wrapped into a question format. In this instance, you may see the [fix] flag. That means the reporter intends to go back and put that statement into colloquy.

I INTERRUPTIONS

Speaking over one another, conversations in the background, noises in another room, construction, loud HVAC units, the rustling of papers, and so on can all interfere with the reporter’s ability to accurately hear the testimony. There may also be an increase in dashes in the transcript if multiple people speak at once. The [au] flag may also appear here, as the reporter is challenged to preserve testimony when there is simultaneous speaking. This is also an occasion where she may speak up so as to preserve the integrity of the record.

P PRONUNCIATIONS

A word may be mispronounced, misspoken, or mumbled, and reporters write it as they hear it. This can often lead to the wrong word appearing in the transcript. You are welcome to inform the reporter of the proper spelling and/or pronunciation so he or she can make the record as accurate as possible.

T TELL US

Being informed of your expectations leads to successful interactions and your needs being met! Reporters love to be given a list of case-specific spellings, time-sensitive turnaround times, exhibits they can premark, a layout of the day’s events, and so on. We want to provide you with the best realtime experience possible.