

# Learn to dictate in 5 easy steps



So you've  
decided to  
dictate....

Maybe you heard that dictating your work is on average 7x faster than typing it up yourself...

Maybe you learned how to dictate during your training and are just out of practice?

Maybe you think you can type faster than you can dictate but are still open-minded enough to give it a try?

Well, whatever the reason, you've come to the right place.

We work with hundreds of law firms, medical practices, surveyors, financial services, and other professional service providers across the UK and Ireland.

Our 24/7 service helps all of our clients save time and money on their typing.

But even some of our most frequent users can benefit from a refresh of the fundamentals of dictating

**So read on for our 5 top tips on how to get started.**

# Step 1:

# Relax



## Out of your comfort zone?

Doing anything new often puts you outside of your comfort zone. And dictation, if you're not used to it, can make you feel a bit anxious.

Don't worry, this feeling vanishes very quickly upon receiving your freshly typed dictation back and seeing firsthand how good our typists are.

If you are really anxious about dictating, why not try and record something you have already written? You can then play it back to yourself and hear how it would sound to our team.

## Feeling self-conscious?

Some people, especially trainees, can be very self-conscious about being overheard by their superiors. You could try changing your perspective and think of dictation as being a telephone conversation. Or you could try writing brief notes to work from initially.

## Anxious about dictating?

## Don't worry, that feeling won't last.

## It doesn't have to be perfect

Don't worry too much about making every single dictation you record faultless.

Remember, we are real people on the other end of the recording so we know not to type your "oops" and "erm"s.

Think of dictation as 'story-telling' and use it as a means to quickly get your first draft written.

## Step 2:

# Press pause

### Give yourself a break

Give yourself a break. Press the pause button when you need to. Rewind a few seconds to remind yourself of what you've just said and then press the record button again to continue.

Just be careful not to overwrite what you have just recorded so double-check the settings on your recording device.

### Do it in two

You don't even have to record the whole thing in one go. If you have a long piece of work it might even be advisable to send off the recording in two lots.

By sending off the first half of your dictated audio, our typists can get started while you record the second part.

Don't forget to name your dictations as *Part 1*, *Part 2* etc., and let our helpdesk know if you would like them returned in a combined document.

### Don't worry about mistakes

This point bears repeating. Sure, feel free to pause, get your thoughts straight, and then start recording again but don't be too much of a perfectionist.

Humans understand humans; their 'errs', 'ums' and 'ahs', their stutters, their occasional mumblings and mixed-up grammar.

If you could be understood in a telephone conversation then your diction is clear enough.

Don't worry about punctuation either as our experienced transcriptionists will transcribe with correct grammar.

Or not (if you would prefer) - each user is different so we maintain individual user knowledge bases where we can add your specific instructions and return your work just the way you like it.



# Step 3:

# The

# "Do's"

## The NATO phonetic alphabet:

A - ALFA	J - JULIETT	S - SIERRA
B - BRAVO	K - KILO	T - TANGO
C - CHARLIE	L - LIMA	U - UNIFORM
D - DELTA	M - MIKE	V - VICTOR
E - ECHO	N - NOVEMBER	W - WHISKEY
F - FOXTROT	O - OSCAR	X - X-RAY
G - GOLF	P - PAPA	Y - YANKEE
H - HOTEL	Q - QUEBEC	Z - ZULU
I - INDIA	R - ROMEO	

### Which template?

At the start of each recording, tell your transcriptionist which template you want to use, eg 'Please can I have a letter ...'.

Also, if we work in your CMS, don't forget to include the case reference so our team know where your document should be saved.

### Go with the flow

Follow the natural flow of your template and dictate the various sections as they appear on the document.

### Spell out the hard stuff

It's helpful to spell new or unusual names and addresses and to use the phonetic alphabet to distinguish 'M' or 'N', similarly 'S' and 'F', and when you want bullet points or emphasis.

### Is it noisy?

Be aware of noise in your environment as it may impair the recording quality.

Mobile apps are great for giving us mobility or flexibility but not if there are Police sirens blaring in the background.

### Distance from the mic.

Record your dictation at the correct distance from the microphone (approx. 5-10 inches).

Being too close can also distort the sound. It helps if you don't eat or chew at the same time.

**The ideal distance between your mouth and the microphone is about the length of your forearm.**

# Step 4:

# The

# "Don't's"

## Don't eat and dictate

This should seem obvious but eating food or chewing on pens may not yield the best dictation results for you.

Speak clearly into the microphone without anything obstructing your mouth.

## Don't rustle papers

Rustling papers, which are often closer to the mic. than your voice is, can make it very difficult to transcribe accurately. Please be mindful of this and perhaps use the pause button if you need to flick through a paper document. Just remember to click record again when you are ready.

## Don't let alerts interrupt

The noise alerts of notifications from your computer and mobile can be deceptively loud. Where possible, mute these devices when you are dictating.

## Don't turn away from the mic.

It is easy to be distracted and turn away from the microphone as you are dictating.

While you may remain the same distance from the mic., the sound traveling in a different direction can reduce the quality of your recording.

## Don't speak too fast

Speak slowly and clearly. All of our typists will be chosen with experience of your area of expertise. This ensures they will be familiar with the language you use. However, when someone dictates very quickly these words can often merge together.

So, for the best and most accurate results, take a few miles per hour off your dictation speed.

The other advantage of this is that our typists won't have to pause and rewind sections of audio and so you are more likely to get your work back sooner.



# Step 5:

# First

# Draft



## Draft and move on

It's easier said than done to just speak, get the first dictation sent away, then wait for the document to be returned - especially if you have the habit of drafting as you type.

For anyone new to dictation new habits must be formed.

So think about the benefits that dictation will bring you.

As your first draft is being typed, what's next on your to-do list to get done?

## Make notes

Get that first draft written, get the next first draft written, and so on. Then edit your documents.

As you use dictation more, your confidence grows, your drafting technique improves and you will soon see that those first drafts become final versions.

To help you get started think about writing some brief notes first or have a template to refer to.

“ Every first draft is perfect because all the first draft has to do is exist. It's perfect in its existence. The only way it could be imperfect would be to NOT exist.”

— Jane Smiley

# Bonus step:

# Practice



## Practice makes perfect

There's only one way to develop a new habit and learn a new skill. In order to put in the required effort, the perceived benefits have to mean enough to you personally.

The aggregation of small changes eventually will make a huge difference to how you work. You will be surprised at how efficient you will eventually become.

Benchmark your current position: how many files do you work through each day; how quickly do you respond to your clients; when is your most productive time of day for meeting clients; when should you work on your documents?

Review your progress after a couple of weeks to see if there is improvement in your productivity and working practices.

Don't give up after a few days!

## Use our support

At Document Direct we offer 24/7 helpdesk support.

This means we have real people on call around the clock to help you with individual dications.

You may have urgent questions on how to submit a document or perhaps you made a mistake and want to make sure we know about it to amend it.

Simply email:  
**[helpdesk@documentdirect.co.uk](mailto:helpdesk@documentdirect.co.uk)**

We hope you find this guide helpful and please let us know how you get on.