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Don't Phone It In: Tips for Long-Distance Interviews

By [Carrie Anton](#), under Make it Work. Carrie Anton is a full-time freelance writer focusing on health, fitness, and sports. She's been published in Self, Women's Health, Oxygen, and Maximum Fitness.

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ith landlines disappearing and people opting for email and text

conversations, the thought of doing interviews by phones feels a tad antiquated. But when a freelance writer needs a quote in a pinch or wants to chat up a faraway source, a phone call may be the only option for a "live" interview.



The problem with the phone interview, like any live interview, is grasping everything the source is saying while still keeping a consistent conversational flow to the interview. An email interview is always an option, but nothing beats the spontaneity of a source's real-time responses. And taking notes is another route, but unless the writer is well-versed in short hand, quotes may not be as accurate as an assigning editor or fact-checker may like. But all is not lost! Below are some useful applications for capturing every little bit that the source has to say.

Digital voice recorders

The more modern digital recorders have replaced old-day dictation devices with their tiny little cassette tapes. Now, big

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name brands such as Sony and Olympus offer digital recording devices that allow you to take hundreds of hours of recording time and download the files to your PC or MAC as an audio file.

Tip: When using a recorder with a phone, a writer will need to purchase an additional accessory or jack to pick up both sides of the conversation. Without it, get ready to juggle a cellphone and recorder in one hand while speaking.

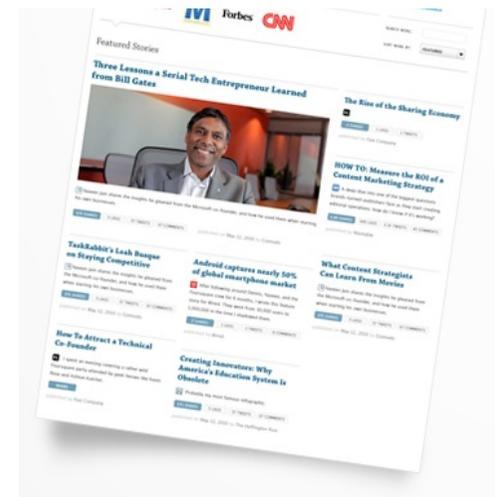
Equipment-free recording

After one too many run-ins with technical difficulties, Marcia Layton Turner, freelance writer and executive director of [Association of Ghostwriters](#), needed a new alternative to hardware and found one online. “I love [RecordMyCalls.com](#),” Marcia said. “Being able to dial into a toll-free number, type in my source’s phone number and, voila, it’s instantly being recorded is magic to me.” RecordMyCalls.com, as well other sites like it, charges a nominal per minute fee. When complete, you only need access to the Internet to manage your recordings.

Tip: For those writers who do a lot of phone interviews, invest in a package rate to get the best deal.

Go online

Want to get as close to a face-to-face interview as possible? Try



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Skype. In her [Freelance Switch](#) article, *How to Handle a Telephone Interview*, Barbara Diggs said, “Skype offers a free MP3 recorder, which automatically records conversations as soon as they begin. More and more of my sources have Skype and no one has ever objected to using the service for an interview.”

Tip: *A writer should only use the video interview if he can ensure his camera can produce good picture quality. If not, stick with Skype’s phone version instead.*

Image Courtesy of Flickr, Niels van Reijmersda

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