



# The Layman's Guide to **Legal Transcriptions**

# Table Of Contents

## PAGE

- 3** What does legal transcription mean and why is it important?
- 4** What is Legal Transcription?
- 5** Court Reporting versus Legal Transcription
- 7** Types of Legal Transcription Services
- 9** Legal Guidelines and Formatting
- 12** Supplemental Types of Legal Transcriptions
- 13** Importance of Legal Transcriptions
- 14** Conclusion: Precision and Integrity

# What does legal transcription mean and why is it important?

Conferencing calling or virtual meetings has become a necessity in organizations, especially with the growing preference towards working remotely. More often than not, a conference call can last up to an hour or more. This is because conference calls are often used to contact employees or individuals from different parts of the globe, therefore making it ideal that every key item is discussed in just one sitting in order to save time. In addition, conference calls have become prominent in companies as it brings with it a lot of benefits. However, these benefits might be harder to achieve if the calls are lengthy and not recorded properly.

Aside from taking notes, when it comes to conference calls, there are two ways to record it for future perusal – through audio recording and conference call transcription. Unfortunately, listening to an audio recording might take longer and difficult to digest – it would be harder to find the specific information being searched for especially if the particular call is hours long. Getting your conference call transcribed is a better alternative – not only does this make it easier to review everything that was discussed, but it's also less time-consuming.

In this guide, we will discuss the importance of conference call transcriptions as well as provide which features a transcription service must have in order to deliver quality conference call transcriptions.

**What is Legal Transcription?**

**Court Reporting versus Legal Transcription**

**Types of Legal Transcription Services**

**Legal Guidelines and Formatting**

**Supplemental Types of Legal Transcriptions**

**Importance of Legal Transcriptions**

**Conclusion**



# What is Legal Transcription?

Legal transcription converts any spoken legal proceeding or dictation into a text format. Transcriptions can be created from either live proceedings or recordings. They may be generated by a software program and then later edited by a human transcriptionist, or a legal transcriptionist may type the entirety of the recording.

While legal transcriptions can be created in-house, most law firms, attorneys, prosecutors, and other legal professionals outsource this time-consuming work to legal transcript services so that they can focus on building and reviewing cases, meeting with clients, and other primary work. Transcripts improve the efficiency of work by making information more accessible, searchable, and organized easily.

# Court Reporting versus Legal Transcription

Courtroom proceedings typically require a more specialized type of transcription known as stenography. During live courtroom proceedings, licensed court reporters or stenographers transcribe everything that is spoken via a device called a stenotype. This allows stenographers to type in shorthand during live proceedings to be able to type at the same pace with people's speeches. A computer then converts shorthand writing into words (i.e. legal transcripts).

Court transcription services require intense training and certification that is distinct from general transcription. Beyond the operation of a stenotype and an emphasis on legal terminology and comprehension, stenographers need a strong grasp of court policies and procedures.



Many states accept a minimum level of certification from associations such as the National Court Reporters Association (NCRA) which issues a certification as a Registered Professional Reporter (RPR). Some states require additional licensure according to state-specific standards. In all cases, however, training and licensure are more rigorous and specific to court reporting only. 

---



In contrast, legal transcription services can generate almost any other type of legal transcripts. Most of these are created using audio or video recordings after the live event. Transcriptionists must be well-versed in keyboarding and extremely thorough in their work, as unlike court reporters, they have the luxury of pausing and playing back the recording as often as they need to ensure

accuracy. Some transcriptionists use speech-to-text software to generate transcripts that they can thoroughly edit afterwards, but others prefer to directly transcribe the whole recording, especially if it contains many audio difficulties.

Proficiency and knowledge of legal terminologies are important assets of legal transcription companies, although legal transcriptionists do not share the same licensing requirements of stenographers. Legal transcriptionists may complete a one-year certification program focused on legal terminology and keyboarding skills. Associations such as the American Association of Electronic Reporters and Transcribers (AAERT) offer separate certifications for court reporting and legal transcription. However, there are states that do not require certification for legal transcriptionists. █

# Types of Legal Transcription Services

Legal professionals use transcribing services for diverse purposes, but the following are the most requested types of legal transcripts:



## Pleadings

In the early stages of a lawsuit, parties formally submit their claims and defenses. Plaintiffs state the reason for pursuing the lawsuit and what the issue is and defendants submit their responses, that is denying any wrongdoing or stating their defenses.

## Subpoenas

Subpoenas require people to provide physical evidence or testimony in court or face consequences.

## Summonses

These documents require people to appear in court. Summonses have judicial, civil, and administrative variants.

## Sworn Statements

These statements reduce the time and money spent testifying in court. Particularly in cases which are uncontested or during preliminary proceedings, courts will accept testimonial evidence submitted as a document which people sign under penalty of perjury.

## Depositions

Depositions refer to witnesses' sworn out-of-court testimonies. Deposition transcriptions are mostly used for gathering information as attorneys build their cases.

## Interrogations

These are recordings of suspects or witnesses being questioned by law enforcement authorities.

## Hearings

Hearings encompass a wide variety of legal proceedings undertaken in front of a judge or magistrate without the presence of a jury. They are a more informal means of resolving disputes and do not share the strict procedural rules of a court. For instance, arbitration hearings resolve disputes using a neutral third party. Other types include court hearings, public hearings, administrative hearings, and judicial hearings.

## Wiretaps and Phone Calls


Surveillance evidence or recordings of phone calls must be transcribed for use in building a case and presenting evidence.

## Memorandums

Memorandums outline the terms of contracts or provide written points of reference outlining particular details of legal transactions.

## Dictations, Meetings, and Conferences

Just as doctors and medical professionals can save time by dictating patient notes to be transcribed later, legal professionals can do their work more efficiently by dictating notes, documents, reports, expense tracking, and more. Transcripts of meetings and conferences with clients or co-workers tend to be more effective to reference instead of relying on memory or handwritten notes alone.

Legal transcription rates will vary for different types of services. Rates are usually dependent on turnaround time, the level of precision demanded (i.e. type of verbatim), and the gravity of work. For instance, transcripts of wire taps presented as evidence in court will naturally command a higher rate than dictation transcriptions. 





# Legal Guidelines and Formatting

The guidelines and formatting requirements for legal transcriptions widely vary by location, type of transcript, and type of client. However, most legal transcription services must meet six critical requirements irrespective of their differences:

## 1 Verbatim transcription

Legal decisions can hinge on single words or phrases, thus, legal transcription services must provide as close to 100% accuracy as possible. Verbatim transcription is required, meaning all utterances such as “uh” or “um”, long pauses, and even non-verbal signals like head nods are strictly to reflect in the transcript. However, in formal communication via memorandums, the transcriptionist will omit utterances and correct any grammatical errors without misconstruing the original thought of the speaker.

## 2 Speaker attribution

Equally important is ensuring that what is transcribed verbatim is attributed to the correct speakers. In other words, precision is absolutely essential regarding who said what. Transcriptionists must accurately denote the change in speaker and correctly use timestamps as needed.

## 3 Expertise in legal terminology

Understanding the source material for legal transcriptions usually requires a strong grasp of legal terminology. Transcriptionists need to be able to proceed smoothly upon hearing words such as affidavit or subpoena and a wide variety of Latin phrases such as “nolo contendere” or “motion in limine.”

## 4 Expertise in accents

Capturing verbatim transcription often requires an ability to correctly identify what speakers are saying in different accents. Familiarity with accents and an understanding of the context of the source material ensures greater precision. For instance, “beer” may sound like “bear” when spoken with a Boston regional accent or “later” may sound like “lighter” when spoken with an Australian accent.

## 5 Certification

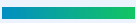
While requirements vary from state to state, legal transcription services should have a minimum level of certification in legal terminology and comprehension for the sake of better serving their clients.

While these requirements are more or less fundamental to legal transcriptions, specific guidelines for formatting are rather complex and can vary greatly by location, client, and type of transcript. At a basic level, however, transcriptions should always identify obvious key details such as the name of a case, the name of the court, the docket number, times, dates, the parties present and their roles (e.g. defendant, plaintiff).

States may have more specific requirements on formatting legal transcripts, particularly

## 6 Confidentiality

As with all legal matters, confidentiality is fundamental to legal transcriptions. Both source materials and transcripts must be held confidentially and stored and shared with the highest level of security.

if they are being presented as evidence in a case. However, these guidelines tend to be far more stringent for court reporters than for other types of legal transcriptionists. For instance, the Massachusetts court system publishes the Uniform Transcript Format. This document establishes expectations about formatting down to details such as what color and weight of paper are acceptable. As transcriptionist, you should be very clear of your client's expectations and if there are any legal formatting guidelines that must be closely adhered to. 



# Supplemental Types of Legal Transcriptions

Legal professionals are not the only people who demand legal transcriptions. Professionals in the fields finance and banking, real estate, education, energy, insurance, healthcare, and other sectors may need the help of a transcription service for legal purposes. Generally, these fall into two broad categories of transcriptions which relate either to insurance or to investigations.

## Insurance Transcriptions

Insurance companies require a variety of transcripts that have legal ramifications. Claims transcriptions typically include interviews and recorded statements regarding property damage, theft, or casualty. Insurance agents also use transcripts of dictated notes about ongoing investigations, summary reports, or reports on property, assets, and other holdings. Medical insurance companies must be particularly vigilant about maintaining confidential transcriptions to remain compliant with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

## Investigative Transcriptions

Investigative transcriptions also involve highly sensitive, confidential information, and like insurance transcriptions, they also span a variety of fields. Investigative transcriptions could involve interviews between police and witnesses, examining fraud at a bank, medical malpractice, fire or motor vehicle accidents, and compliance with safety standards among many others. These transcripts could be used as legal evidence in a court of law or strictly intended for internal use only. ■

# Importance of Legal Transcriptions

The importance of legal transcriptions lies on its broad range of applications that generally provide users with four key benefits:

## 1. Efficiency and Searchability

By converting live proceedings, audio, or video content into a text format, legal transcription companies help other professionals become more efficient at their work. Lawyers, insurers, and others can improve the efficiency and accuracy of their work by having key quotes, dates, and evidence more accessible. Legal transcriptions also make particular words and phrases easily searchable, reducing the amount of time legal professionals spend searching specific data as they verify statements and build cases.

## 2. Organization and Customization

Legal transcriptions also help keep professionals more organized. Transcripts can be stored in-house and/or archived on another platform. They can be sorted by client, case, time, date, or other categorization. Transcripts can also be customized to fit the formatting standards of a particular firm or individual.



## 3. Monetary Savings

When legal professionals dictate notes, memorandums, summonses, and other legal documents for transcription, their firms cut administrative costs and use employees' time for higher value work.

## 4. Legal Evidence

Transcripts can also play an important role during insurance disputes, appeals, hearings, or court proceedings. Transcripts of phone calls, wiretaps, sworn statements, interrogations, and other evidence may be presented in court.

# Conclusion: Precision and Integrity

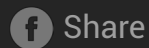
*Legal transcription is a growing industry that demands transcriptionists not only precision and strong comprehension of legal terminologies, but a deep commitment to integrity and confidentiality. Finding legal transcription companies that have a dual focus on quality and ethics is paramount. Legal professionals should expect the same level of rigor and integrity from legal transcription services that they devote to their own clients.*

---

**TranscriptionWing**   
*Transcription service that soars above the rest.*

[www.transcriptionwing.com](http://www.transcriptionwing.com)

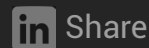
+1-203-413-2414 | 888-223-9488



Share



Tweet



Share

TranscriptionWing provides affordable and accurate transcriptions to various industry sectors including market research, technology, finance, as well as legal, educational, and religious institutions, in addition to HIPAA compliant transcriptions to the healthcare industry.

TranscriptionWing™ specializes in providing accurate audio transcriptions at flexible turnaround options that range from four hours to five days at affordable rates per recorded minute.

TranscriptionWing solutions also include automated voice-to-text transcription clean-up as well as InSummary™, a meeting minutes summary service.

TranscriptionWing is a service of Civicom Inc., a global leader in proprietary audio conferencing technology, online meeting software, web technology tools, and superior recording capabilities.