

Landline Recording

Introduction

This document provides an overview of approaches to recording audio conversations facilitated through landline connection devices and services. Services described include both paid and free options, many of which require the interviewer to already own a professional audio recording device to capture the signal. There are certainly other approaches beyond those mentioned here, and the selection below serves as a curated overview of only a handful of systems rather than an all-inclusive survey.

Things to know

The first tenet of landline interviews is “it’s hard to make a telephone interview not sound like a telephone interview.” In general, one should attempt to make the interviewee sound as clear as possible, and this typically means observing the interviewee’s decibel level, as many of the recording options listed below naturally favor the interviewer’s volume.

When considering your landline setup, it is important to know what sort of technology your lines employ. There are two main options: analog, which most will identify as a traditional phone line, and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), which utilizes an internet connection to make the actual call. Certain adaptors and services will only work with one or the other, so make sure and investigate both your infrastructure and products to confirm they are compatible

Landline recordings are obviously missing the visual component to interviewing, therefore you may need to work extra hard to establish rapport with your interviewee. A pre-interview call can help this tremendously, as well as a brief chat before the recording begins. Try to pick up on speech habits and remember that you may have to provide longer pauses than usual to allow the interviewee to fully complete a thought.

Remember that each participant may need to hold a phone/handset up to their face for a long period of time in an oral history interview, so plan breaks accordingly, or confirm that your interviewees have access to headsets/earbuds/etc.

| | <u>JK Audio QuickTap</u> | <u>FreeConferenceCall.com</u> | <u>JK Audio Broadcast Host</u> | <u>Phone Speaker with Recorder</u> |
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| Cost | \$60 | Free, or “pay what you’d like” | \$515 | Only what you pay for your recorder/microphones |
| Recorded file format | Depends on audio recorder (WAV preferred) | WAV or MP3 | This is not a recorder, it is a telephone/microphone interface often used in a broadcast context for merging a landline or VOIP telephone call with an XLR microphone, and sending the merged signals to an external recorder | Any format your recorder supports |
| File storage | SD card located in audio recorder | Downloadable link from the service | No storage | SD card used by your recorder |
| Internet connection requirement | None | Not required for the call, but needed to access the service online and set up the call | Does not require Internet connection | None |
| Required skills | Familiarity with audio recorder operation | Basic internet platform familiarity | Familiarity with audio recording equipment | Familiarity with recording equipment |
| Hardware Requirements | Non-VoIP landline telephone, audio recorder with 3.5mm audio input jack, male-to-male 3.5mm connector, additional telephone coiled cord | Landline or mobile phone for each participant | Telephone, Telephone cable, XLR Cable, XLR microphone, audio recorder | Landline/mobile phone with speakerphone option |
| Hardware Recommendations | Zoom H5 (use included XY module) | N/A | N/A | More professional landline phones will produce clearer sound, mobile phones with Bluetooth functionality can connect to external speakers for clearer sound |

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| <p>Pros</p> | <p>Simple, direct connection from a traditional landline telephone to a professional audio recorder which blends sources from each end of a telephone call into a single channel that can be captured based on the interviewer's preferred file settings</p> | <p>Both participants can use a mobile device, the service records for you, easy to share call-in number, can accommodate multiple interviewees</p> | <p>Extremely powerful for creating radio-style telephone interviews where interviewer utilizes an external microphone and the interviewee calls in via telephone</p> | <p>Very flexible, requires no additional investment if you already own recording equipment</p> |
| <p>Cons</p> | <p>Monophonic result, no on-board tools to mix audio levels</p> | <p>Less command over recording levels</p> | <p>Initial setup will require some experimentation. Certain VoIP phones may require the Broadcast Host Digital Hybrid model instead.</p> | <p>Audio quality suffers through a speaker/indirect recording source</p> |
| <p>Additional information</p> | <p>Local recording on preferred audio hardware provides a certain level of security for at-risk remote projects</p> | <p>FreeConferenceCall.com acts as a middleman where each participant calls into a pre-defined number. While this is very convenient for the day of the interview, interviewers may want to call interviewees directly before the interview for the pre-interview process and to provide the contact information for the future interview</p> | | <p>Placing a recorder/microphone in front of a phone speaker is the easiest way to record a telephone interview. The main concern lies in the sound quality of your interviewee, though the interviewer quality is often quite clear.</p> |