

## Quick Guide: Get back what you dictate!

Producing work from audio dictation requires the skills of two people: the person dictating and the person transcribing (let's call her your secretary). And while digital dictation is generally clearer than analogue it is still vital that you paint the picture with your words for your secretary, and add colour with your voice and instructions. So here then are the **top ten tips** to help you:

- 1. Prepare.** Gather all the files and documents you need. "Flagging" particular documents will help; just don't remove them when you give the file to your secretary!
- 2. Plan the dictation.** Decide what you want to say – make crib notes of points to cover in the right order so that your dictation flows smoothly and naturally. Consider if you need to give any special instructions.
- 3. Sit down!** Walking or pacing while dictating contorts your voice and makes it harder to hear. So sit comfortably, and eliminate as much background noise as possible.
- 4. Say hello or good morning** since friendliness helps the process. And dictate using your normal voice: if you speak too fast, words become indistinct and garbled. If too slow, it becomes boring and demotivating.
- 5. Give instructions before the words** e.g. initial capitals; block capitals; punctuation; bold, underline; money etc. Remember that your secretary listens ahead, typing what she heard 10 or so seconds ago while listening to the next bit.
- 6. Your secretary can only transcribe** what she hears you say. So use your voice to add colour; a slight pause to alert your secretary to instructions; and be clear in your enunciation.
- 7. Punctuation.** While this can be helpful, don't go overboard. A full stop ends a sentence – so you never need to ask for a new sentence. However, always say when you want a new paragraph.
- 8. Spelling.** Dictate or write down (only once!) unusual names, place names, products or trade names. A simple phonetic alphabet will help with those letters that sound similar for example **p & b; t & d; m & n; s & f**. If you don't spell things you **MUST** check the final document.
- 9. Figures.** For speed and accuracy it is better to dictate large amounts as individual figures rather than words eg "five-zero" instead of "fifty" to avoid confusion with "fifteen".
- 10. Check** how much information your secretary would like and get feedback from time to time: what are you doing well or could improve on? Occasionally too, listen to yourself to check what you sound like!

**Compiled by Mary Overton**