
Group Discussion Guidelines



Don't forget to ask permission to record!



Recording discussions can be a valuable tool for capturing important ideas and insights, but it's important to ensure that the recording is of high quality and that all participants are comfortable with the process. Here are some tips to get the best output from your recordings:

In-Person Discussions

Use a high-quality recording device: you really do get what you pay for here.

Position the recording device appropriately: consider placing the device on a tripod or stand, and position it close to the participants. It's also important to ensure that the device is not obstructed by people or objects (especially nibbles!)

Consider using multiple recording devices: you could have one recording device focused on the main speaker or panel, while another records the audience or other activities taking place simultaneously. A back-up is always good as devices break down (and run out of batteries at the worst moments!).

Test the equipment beforehand: this is crucial as this will help to prevent any technical issues from disrupting the discussion.

Establish ground rules for the discussion: to ensure that all participants have an equal opportunity to speak and that the conversation remains focused and productive.

Cloud-Based Discussions

Advance information: distribute a simple 'cheat sheet' to attendees, walking them through how to test their basic video-conferencing audio-visual setup, to minimise wasted time troubleshooting issues.

Microphones: once your respondents are settled ask them to mute their microphones until they are ready to respond, this allows for a clearer recording and less distraction caused by unexpected sounds in the background. With Zoom you also have the ability to mute all microphones and then respondents can unmute as they wish to respond.

Be aware of your own environment: if you are taking notes put your own mic on mute as the microphone will pick up the keyboard or pen strokes and prefer it to the respondents answers, making

accurately deciphering responses very difficult.

Have a contingency plan: if you or your respondents have unforeseen ISP issues (peak-time traffic, signal loss, electrical interference) the connection could potentially drop or break-up. Plan at the start of the call to switch to the telephone if the video link becomes a problem – don't forget to hit 'record' if this happens.

Store the recording securely: ensure only authorised individuals have access to it. This can be achieved by password-protecting the recording and storing it on a secure server.

Which type of recording equipment is right for you?

Digital voice recorder: an affordable option. It's portable, easy to use, and can provide clear audio quality.

Microphone array: a set of microphones arranged in a specific pattern that can capture audio from all directions. It's a great option for recording discussions in a large room with multiple participants. Some popular options include the Zoom H2n Handy Recorder or the Tascam DR-05.

Conference microphone: a specialised microphone designed for group discussions. It can pick up audio from multiple participants and often comes with noise-cancelling features. Some popular options include the Jabra Speak 710 or the Polycom CX5100.

Smartphones or tablets: if it would be deemed a disaster if your recording couldn't be transcribed due to quality, then we recommend not using this option or using a back-up device. Most smartphones can capture decent audio quality, however, you may need to invest in a microphone accessory or a recording app for better quality.

The ideal distance to record group discussions depends on several factors, including the size of the group, the acoustics of the room, and the quality of the recording equipment. Here are some general guidelines to help you determine the best recording distance for group discussions:

Small groups: a recording device placed on a table or other surface within a few feet of the participants should be sufficient.

Medium-sized groups: it's best to place the recording device in the centre of the table or on a nearby tripod. This will capture clear audio from all participants without being obstructed by furniture or other objects in the room.

Large groups: it's best to use multiple recording devices placed strategically around the room. This will ensure that all participants can be heard clearly.

Acoustics of the room: if the room has hard surfaces, it may be necessary to place the recording device closer to the participants to minimize echo and other sound reflections.

We also recommend the following:

Security: ensure the choice of system you are planning to use is secure. We have listed below some brands that are frequently used, but do check they adhere to the security you require.

Skype, Google Hangouts, Zoom and other cloud-based solutions: usually, recording via the microphone in your computer will produce a passable audio file. However, you can find recording software online which is inexpensive that may produce a better-quality recording.

Teams: Microsoft Teams offers a range of collaboration tools, such as screen sharing, virtual whiteboards, and real-time chat, that make it easy for participants to share ideas and work together in real-time. The platform also supports video and audio calls with up to 10,000 participants, making it an ideal solution for large-scale meetings and webinars.

BlueJeans: One of the most notable features of BlueJeans is its ability to support large-scale meetings with up to 50,000 participants. This makes it an ideal platform for webinars, town hall meetings, and other events where a large number of people need to be connected.

Google Plus conferences: A very clever way of sharing your Google Plus video conferences is to upload them directly to your YouTube channel; then simply provide a link for transcription.

Zoom focus: This software allows you to focus in on one person in a group and isolate what they are saying. This is especially helpful when conducting large groups, where there could be a lot of over speaking, and will allow more content to be captured.

Upload your files: Global Lounge is the secure uploading facility for McGowan Transcriptions. You can upload via our website (top right) or via logging in if you have credentials set up in advance of your group taking place. You can save your recordings to 'files' if using an iPhone and upload to Global Lounge from there using your mobile device:

<https://mcgowantranscriptions.globallounge.co.uk/login.php>



Keep an eye on new free technology; the Krisp Noise Cancelling App can remove background voices of other people in the same room.

