Telephone Recording for Coaches
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Why Record Calls?

The ability to record phone calls can be of tremendous benefit to a coach. For many certification programs, you will be required to record calls for supervisions. In addition, with appropriate permission, you can excerpt from sessions to post "examples" to your website. Or you can offer teleclasses, and then resell the recordings.

There are a number of ways to accomplish this, and some of them can be confusing. The goal of this document is to provide a couple of simple options that have worked for other coaches.

Method 1: Use a Conference Bridge Service

Most paid conference services, and a few of the free ones offer the ability to record calls. This is a great solution for teleclasses, and can even be good for client calls, especially if you only need to record a few of them for certification supervisions. The major advantage of using a bridge service is ease of use - there is nothing to buy, recordings can be set up with a few clicks, and recordings can be downloaded by any invited participant, usually within minutes of the end of the call.

The downside is that you need to schedule your calls in advance on the service's website, though most services allow you to set up recurring invitations. There are also security considerations of using a conference service for recording client calls (see below).

We recommend Rondee to clients because they are feature-rich, and *free* unless you want to offer a toll-free number for your call. Recorded calls are available about 15 minutes after the last participant disconnects, and are preserved on the website for 30 days (though you can download the MP3 file to keep it indefinitely).

Method 2: Record the Calls on Your Computer

This method is a little more complex to set up initially, but far more flexible in some ways. For example, you can control the quality of the recording, segment the recording by time (so, for example, they will fit on a CD later), and set scheduled recordings. To record calls on your computer, you will need two main things:

1. **A call recording adapter.** These are fairly easy to find on the internet (some example here) and typically cost $20 - $50. Some of the devices plug in between the wall and the phone, some between the phone and the handset (or headset, if you use one), and some plug in to the wall next to the phone (using a line splitter, which you can get at Radio Shack or a hardware store). Most of these are *not* compatible with smartphones (try looking here) or cordless phones.

   Make sure the adapter you get has a 3.5mm plug at the end, to match the input on your computer. If the recording adapter you like only has a 2.5mm output, don't worry - you can get an adapter for a couple of dollars.

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2. **Recording Software.** There are countless pieces of software out there that can record audio input on your computer. We recommend Easy Hi-Q from Roemer Software - it's fairly easy to set up and has a downloadable trial (the software costs $29.95 if you like it). Also, Audacity is very good and is free (*and* allows you to edit your audio later), but is a little harder to use.

   Once you configure the software and tell it what kind of recording to make and where on your computer to store recordings, you simply plug in your phone adapter, start the program, pick up the phone and hit record. Do take care - these recordings can get large if you record them at high quality. Because of this, we recommend recording to MP3 (using one of the higher quality settings, but feel free to experiment) instead of WAV format, since MP3 takes up less space on your hard drive.

Privacy and Security*

It's worth taking a moment to discuss security and privacy. There are two major issues to discuss here: confidentiality of recordings, and consent to record calls.

Confidentiality

Because client calls contain confidential information by their nature, you should treat the recording files as carefully as you would your client's paper files or payment information. It's worth mentioning that this is a weakness of using a bridge service to record calls - for a brief period, anyway, they are posted to a website for the client or you to download. Though it's not easy for someone else to download them instead, it is theoretically possible.

Privacy and Disclosure

US Federal law allows the recording of phone calls with the consent of at least one party (visit the Federal Trade Commission website for more information). 38 states have adopted this legal standard, which means, in most states, that you can record calls without informing the other party or parties. More information on recording rules in various countries is also here.

In twelve US states (CA, CT, FL, IL, MD, MA, MI, MN, NV, NH, PA and WA), all-party consent is required by state law (this is sometimes misleadingly referred to as "two-party" consent, but when more than two parties are on the call, all must consent).

The safest way to record calls, though, is to always say that the call is being recorded at the beginning of the call, and after you've started recording, which is how most conference services operate. This is especially important where people on the call may be calling from multiple states or countries, where laws may differ.

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* the information in this article is not intended as legal advice - please consult an attorney for additional information on these topics.

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