



CENTRAL OTAGO ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

GUIDELINES FOR ABSTRACTING

The purpose of the abstract is to provide both a guide and an index to the interview for any potential future users. Place yourself in the shoes of a potential researcher, considering what they may seek to find information on.

A successful abstract should encourage readers to listen to the recording, be as succinct as possible, and use only words that are essential. Aim for around 1.5–2 pages of abstract per 30 minutes of interview.

It should aim to be neutral or non-interpretive, and maintain integrity with the information in the recording.

- Use the 'Abstract Example & Template' as a template for the header, use **SAVE AS** before typing over.
- Use capitalisation for KEY WORDS, NAMES of PEOPLE, PLACES, BUSINESSES, ORGANISATIONS, OCCUPATIONAL TITLES etc. When typing a name, always include the surname as well, even if it is not spoken. I.e "John [SMITH]. Use the large square brackets for information that is not explicitly included in the audio.
- Include dates mentioned in the audio, however birth dates and marriage dates should be recorded as [Date*] to indicate that a date has been given, but removed for privacy and security reasons.
- When a new topic is introduced, start a new block of text with a new time code.
- Use words like - **explains** (most commonly used), - **describes** (for pictorial images), - **details** (for listed information) -**mentions** (for a side topic), -**recalls** and -**discusses** to give the researcher an idea of what is included and how much material there is on a particular topic. 'Mentions how travelled to school', for example, means that there is less information than if you had written 'Describes how travelled to school'. It is important to choose your words carefully.
- Keep an ear out for a particularly meaningful or memorable phrase. Place this in quote marks.
- Quotes help to give an idea of how the interviewee speaks, and they may be used to highlight key points in the testimony or clarify a difficult technical explanation. However, use them sparingly.

- Use the most abbreviated form possible, one technique is to omit every word that is not essential. Ie “Doesn’t like broccoli”
- Omit words such as ‘the’, ‘an’, ‘a’, ‘very’, ‘extremely’, ‘pretty’, ‘a bit’, in order to keep it succinct.
- Use a dash ‘Mother baked oatcakes – had oatmeal porridge every day.’
- Sensitive material- avoid writing specifics of defamatory or hurtful material, but rather use general references to such material.
- Use [] for material that does not appear in the audio but which has been added to the abstract for clarification. For example [FAMILY BACKGROUND], parents married in ALEXANDRA.
- Use [?] for material which is uncertain, either because it cannot be heard easily or because it has not been verified. **At the completion of the abstract, you can then go back and correct this with the interviewee.**
- Use parenthesis () to indicate material which are asides or explanations which **are** part of the recording.
- **If a certain section stands out as being good for a 3-5 minute extract of the recording, please make a note of the File no, and start and finish times and send this info through to the Oral History Manager. This may then be placed on the online catalogue. Ideally this should not involve sensitive material.**

Include these commonly used headings to summarise a topic, please put in capitals and [];

CLIMATE

CLOTHES

DISCIPLINE

EDUCATION, PRESCHOOL, PRIMARY, SECONDARY, TERTIARY

EMPLOYMENT

EXPRESSION (When non-literal, idiosyncratic or proverbial use of language is used)

FAMILY BACKGROUND (use as heading to discussion about parents [PATERNAL, MATERNAL])

FOOD

GAMES

HEALTH

MEDIA – NEWSPAPER, RADIO, TELEVISION, ONLINE

MUSIC

POLITICS

READING

RELIGION

SPORT

TRAVEL- for modes or types of transport or travel.

Please note down the most important subject topics or keywords in the interview so this can be linked in the search fields of the online catalogue; examples are key names, key places, key topics.