

Annenberg School of Journalism Faculty Policy on Field Reporting

(Revised August 2020)

The Annenberg School of Journalism faculty continue to reinforce that public health policies take precedence over traditional journalism education norms emphasizing in-person reporting. For the safety of all involved, faculty should not assign and students should not be expected to conduct in-person interviews with anyone not already within their current home, residence, or pod. Faculty will work with students to identify alternative reporting practices. These alternative reporting techniques will reflect the best practices of reporting that are consistent with these public health directives.

Students may find themselves in a range of settings, including in their own work and in professional contexts. The Annenberg faculty continue to strongly discourage field reporting and encourage students to consider alternatives. The following protocols reflect industry norms for the best practices for field reporting.

Field Reporting Protocols During Covid-19

♦ **FIRST AND FOREMOST:** Assess whether the story must have elements from the field. **Again, the Annenberg faculty continue to strongly discourage field reporting and encourage students to consider alternatives.** Discuss with your editor, producer or instructor whether there are other ways to get material, such as remote interviews via Zoom or a recorded audio call, feeds for video (e.g. CNN Newsource, Facebook), etc. **See below for detailed training materials on how to capture interviews remotely.**

♦ **DO NOT** go into the field if you are sick, experiencing [any COVID related symptoms](#) or have been in contact with anyone who has tested positive.

♦ Make sure you are familiar with the [CDC guidelines](#) for staying safe during the pandemic.

- ♦ Wear a mask.
- ♦ Carry a small bottle of hand sanitizer and/or wipes. Disinfect frequently.
- ♦ Do not shake hands with anyone and do not allow anyone to touch your equipment.
- ♦ Avoid touching high-traffic surfaces.
- ♦ Consider wearing disposable gloves in the field and in the Media Center.
- ♦ Wash your hands for 30 seconds when you have access to water. Don't just rely on the hand sanitizer.
- ♦ Avoid public transportation.

- ♦ Avoid interviewing people inside, but if you do, make sure it's an open space with lots of air flow.
- ♦ If you are out reporting, keep your mask on at all times. Do not pull it down underneath your chin.
- ♦ Avoid locations where big groups are gathered. If you cover a rally or other large gathering, stay 6-10 feet away from the crowd as much as possible.
- ♦ Keep your field reporting to a minimum -- in and out as quickly as possible.
- ♦ While we don't recommend in-person interviewing, if there is a circumstance where you feel you must be in person, use an extender pole for your mic so you can keep your distance of at least six feet. The Equipment Room has a limited number of boom poles or you can make one yourself by using gaffers tape on a broom handle or any long pole.
- ♦ Make sure your microphone has a windscreen. The foam windscreen can be washed with mild soap and water. Make sure it is completely dry before you put it back on the microphone. (For more tips on distance recording, check out Transom.org.)
- ♦ Consider wrapping your camera or audio recorder in plastic to protect it from any contamination.
- ♦ Stand at an angle from the person you are interviewing and instruct them to continue facing forward so that their breath and droplets do not land on you or yours on them.
- ♦ Wipe down your equipment (headphones, recorders, cables) and cell phone with anti-bacterial wipes before and after you finish your field work.
- ♦ All shared equipment must be cleaned before returning. **DO NOT TAKE EQUIPMENT BACK TO THE EQUIPMENT ROOM THAT YOU HAVEN'T DISINFECTED. Please note the Annenberg equipment room is not open as of 8/17/20.**

The resources site on Annenberg Media has many helpful guides including:

- [How to record video calls on Zoom or Skype](#)
- [How to record audio at home](#)
- [How to screen record on a Mac](#)
- [How to upload videos to Xchange \(shared video server\) from your iPhone](#)
- [How to upload videos to Xchange from off-campus \(from a computer\)](#)
- [How to do a Tape Sync](#)

Remote Reporting Resources

*NOTE: California is a two-party consent state for recording phone conversations, which means you MUST inform the other party when you are recording a conversation.

Recording cell phone calls

Mobile telephone conversations do not yield good audio quality and should only be used if: a) you have no other option available; b) you are using only a few seconds of the recording; c) it is a story device to connote distance.

Here are two popular apps you can use for recording cell phones:

For iPhones: [TapeACall Pro](#)

For Androids: [Call Recorder](#)

Computer-based recording

There are a host of programs you can use for remote interviews that approach studio quality where all you need is a computer and a stable internet connection. We're all familiar with Zoom which gives you video and audio.

Tips for getting good video/audio quality:

- Select a place that's quiet and well lit.
- Avoid a window or lighting that creates shadows; a light in front is usually best.
- Choose a background that's as professional as possible; avoid beds, empty chairs, distracting large objects and clutter.
- Position laptop so the computer screen is eye level; you are not looking up or down at the camera.
- Use airpods or headphones if possible.

There are other programs for **audio-only**. The Internet connection might be more stable, they can record as wav or mp3 files, and they record each person on separate tracks, but also produce an integrated output. Many of these programs work best with Chrome and Firefox browser. Below are a few common programs.

[Zencaster](#): Free and paid plans

[Ringr](#): Paid plans only. Works on desktop computers and mobile devices

[SquadCast](#): Free 7-day trial; can record up to four people at once. Works on desktops and Android devices.

[Cleanfeed](#): Free and works on desktops and Android devices. It also has a Pro account.

Recording sound from the Internet

If you want/need to download audio from the internet (music, archival audio, news reports, sound effects, etc.):

[Audio Hijack](#): Mac -- Free version and paid version \$59.

[Total Recorder](#): Windows -- Basic version \$17.95.

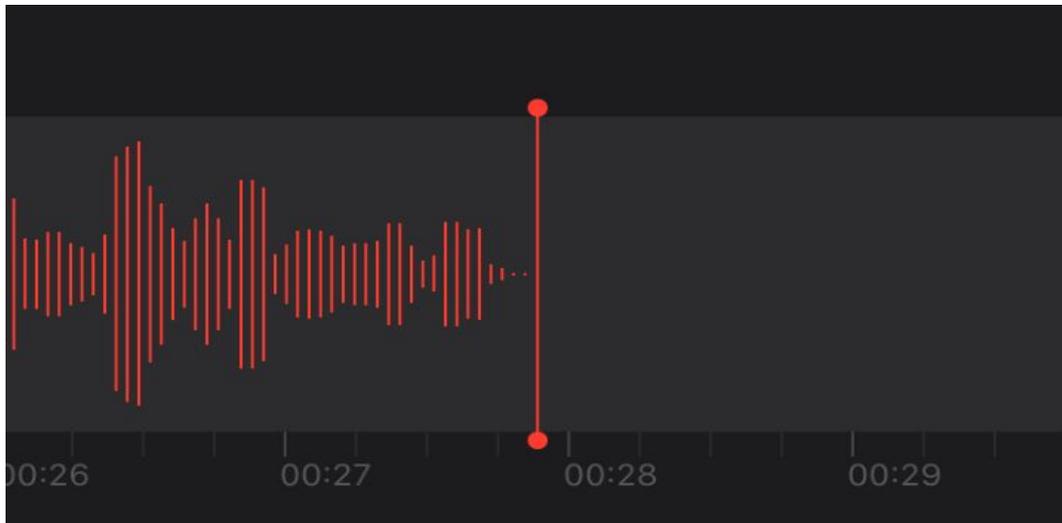
Recording on a smartphone:

For info on how to record using voice memos on iPhones or Androids, see [here](#). You can coach subjects to record themselves on the voice memo -- either an interview or gathering sound in their environment (e.g., someone cooking, a church service, farmer's market, etc.).

- ♦ Make sure your battery is charged up.
- ♦ Switch phone into AIRPLANE MODE.

- ♦ Find a quiet place to record. For recording track, a closet or room with carpet, curtains and pillows is good.
- ♦ Know where the mic is located. The mic should be held 3-5 inches from the person's mouth.
- ♦ Do a test; check for wind and static before you do the recording.
- ♦ Listen back on headphones to make sure it sounds good.

The Voice Memo apps that come loaded on smartphones don't have controls that you can adjust during the recording process. Below is a good representation of what the wave forms should look like.



Shooting video (with a camera or smartphone)

- Only shoot video when you are able to maintain a physical distance of at least six feet from any and all people in the area.
- Do not allow anyone to touch your equipment.
- If using a phone, hold it horizontally when recording video.
- If assigned to a press conference, be sure to maintain a safe distance OR monitor the conference remotely if there is a feed available.
- Try to shoot a variety of angles as well as wide, medium and closeup shots as quickly as possible.
- For editing purposes, it is best when each shot is steady (no pans or zooms) and runs about ten seconds.
- Record natural sound as part of your video whenever possible.
- Avoid person-on-the-street interviews.
- When using an external microphone, use a boom pole whenever possible. The equipment room has a limited number, so plan ahead.

Additional resources (thanks to Amara Aguilar for compiling in [this document](#))

- Poynter - [Student Reporting Guidelines](#)
- Resources on covering coronavirus from SPLC (Student Press Law Center) [Covering the Coronavirus Pandemic](#)
- Poynter: [How Journalists Can Fight Stress covering coronavirus](#)
- NPPA (National Press Photographers Association) [Guidelines on covering coronavirus and protests](#)
- First Draft: [Coronavirus resources for reporters](#)
- RTNDA: [Coronavirus newsroom guide to staying safe](#)
- [The Newsroom Guide to COVID-19](#)