



BASIC ORAL HISTORY RECORDING KIT: EQUIPMENT PURCHASING GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

This guide identifies, explains, and provides recommendations for the equipment needed to assemble a basic oral history recording kit.

There are many options available for each type of equipment included in this guide. While specific equipment is referenced here where possible, it is not an exhaustive list. This guide also provides specifications and recommendations that can be taken into account when considering purchase of equipment. Specific project needs, budget, equipment availability, and other considerations will affect final purchasing decisions.

For more information about oral histories, view related items connected to this resource on the Sustainable Heritage Network in the “[Audio Recordings](#)” category.

- Conducting an Oral History Interview: Workflow
- Oral History Interview Planning and Recording: Workflow
- Suggested Guidelines for Recorded Interviews

PORTABLE DIGITAL AUDIO RECORDER

- Digital audio recorders are available with a wide range of configurations, settings, accessories, and options. The following are recommended minimum requirements, and are included or supported in all the specific equipment listed here.
 - Record WAV audio files
 - Capture audio files with at least a bit depth of 24 bits and frequency of 96kHz
 - Record multiple channels (may require multiple microphones)
 - Use the XLR microphone connector standard
 - Support external SD card storage

- **Tascam DR 100mkiii**
 - <http://tascam.com/product/DR-100mkIII/>
 - https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1263849-REG/tascam_dr_100mkiii_linear_pcm_recorder.html

- **Zoom H6 (H6 only)**
 - <https://www.zoom-na.com/products/field-video-recording/field-recording/h6-handy-recorder>
 - https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/967366-REG/zoom_h6_handy_audio_recorder.html

- **Zoom H6 Kit:**
 - https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/997461-REG/zoom_zoom_h6_portable_recorder_field.html

POWER ADAPTOR AND BATTERIES

- Where possible, using a power adaptor while recording is recommended. However, a reliable power supply may be unavailable in all interview situations and battery use may be required.
- Some digital audio recorders have small internal batteries, however purchasing both a power adaptor and external batteries is recommended.
- Some digital audio recorders will include a power adaptor, and some will require separate purchase. Power adaptors are generally model specific. Manufacturer recommendations should be followed.
- Supported battery types will be dependent on the model of digital audio recorder. Manufacturer recommendations should be followed.

MICROPHONE, CABLES, AND MOUNTS

- Most digital audio recorders have built-in internal microphones, however external microphones generally have better sound quality, and allow for use of different microphones for different recording conditions.
- When selecting a microphone, think about the types of recordings you plan to make. You may need multiple microphones to best record in a range of situations. If you want to record in stereo, or if you want to capture two speakers on separate channels, you will need two microphones.
- Ensure your microphone, cable, and digital audio recorder are all compatible.
 - Eg: all use the XLR connector standard

- A mic stand and boom extension or a table mount mic stand is recommended to provide a stable base for your microphone. Most microphones and mounts will be compatible, but adaptors may be required.
- A windscreen reduces plosives and sibilance, and assists with keeping the speaker at a specific distance from microphone.
- **Audio-Technica AT8004L Handheld Omnidirectional Dynamic Microphone**
 - http://www.audio-technica.com/cms/wired_mics/1e70d69e40d8f82c/index.html
 - https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/565920-REG/Audio_Technica_AT8004L_AT8004L_Handheld_Omnidirectional_Dynamic.html
- **Kopul Studio Elite 4000 Series XLR M to XLR F Microphone Cable - 6' (1.8 m)**
 - https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/845507-REG/Kopul_m4006_Kopul_Studio_Elite_4000.html
- **Auray TT-6220 Telescoping Tabletop Microphone Stand**
 - <http://www.aurayaudio.com/microphone-accessories/microphone-stands/tt-6220-telescoping-tabletop-microphone-stand-black>
 - https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1023331-REG/auray_tt_6220_tellescoping_table_top_mic.html

MEMORY CARDS AND STORAGE

- Some digital audio recorders have limited internal storage, and will fill quickly, especially if capturing high-quality recordings. Using external storage, most commonly SD cards, is recommended.
- Purchasing multiple backup SD cards is recommended.
- Some digital audio recorders may specify the class of SD card supported (eg: SDHC, SDXC). Manufacturer recommendations should be followed.
- **SanDisk 64GB Extreme PRO SDXC UHS-I Memory Card**
 - https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1282965-REG/sandisk_sdsdxxg_064g_gn4in_extremepro_sdhc_64gb.html
- **SanDisk 32GB Extreme PRO SDHC UHS-I Memory Card**
 - https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1282971-REG/sandisk_sdsdxxg_032g_gn4in_extremepro_sdhc_32gb.html

HEADPHONES

- Headphones are primarily used to test audio levels when setting up an interview and to monitor levels while recording. Headphones can also be used to review recorded audio directly from most digital audio recorders.
- Over-the-ear studio or reference headphones with are recommended to isolate microphone signal and reduced background sound bleed. 1/8" plugs and 1/8" to 1/4" adapters also provide a wider range of connection options.
- Comfort is critical, especially for extended use, and will depend on user preferences

Industry Standard:

- **Sony MDR-7506 headphones, 79.99**
 - https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/49510-REG/Sony_MDR_7506_MDR_7506_Headphone.html

Other Pro/Semi-pro options:

- **Audio-Technica ATH-M50x headphones, 149.00**
 - <https://www.sweetwater.com/store/detail/ATHM50x--audio-technica-ath-m50x-closed-back-studio-monitoring-headphones>
- **Audio-Technica ATH-M20x headphones, 49.00**
 - <https://www.sweetwater.com/store/detail/ATHM20x--audio-technica-ath-m20x-closed-back-monitoring-headphone>
- **Senal SMH-500**
 - https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/927992-REG/senal_smh_500_professional_studio_headphones.html
- **Senal SMH-1000**
 - https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/755659-REG/Senal_SMH_1000_STUDIO_MONITOR_HEADPHONES.html

OTHER EQUIPMENT AND RESOURCES

- These items are not strictly required for recording oral histories, but are commonly used, and will depend on the specific project.
- **Pen or pencils and paper or notebook:** Note taking during interviews can be

beneficial, but keyboard noise from laptops or other equipment may be captured on the recording, make sure to test first to avoid added noise.

- **Paperwork:** Interview questions, consent forms, and anything else included in your project documentation.
- **Portable scanner, camera, or video camera:** These are often used for documenting additional resources provided by interviewees, or taking a portrait of interviewees.
- **Physical prompts:** May include photos or other objects to supplement interview questions.