

# Digitisation Guidelines for a Digital Collection Day: Recording Audio<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. USING AN AUDIO RECORDER

When organising a Digital Collection Day, you may need to consider how to record audio. There are two circumstances in which this will occur:

- 1) The Interview Stage in the process where the contributor comes to an interview station to go through their story form and discuss their memories and/or objects for digitisation.
- 2) The 'longer interview' option.

We are aware that not every Digital Collection Day will be able to facilitate audio recordings, possibly due to lack of equipment. It is not essential, therefore, that audio recording takes place, but it is **recommended** wherever possible.

### 1.1. WHY ARE WE AUDIO RECORDING?

Experience has shown that a lot of discussion takes place during the Interview Stage, and while we recommend each interview station has an interviewer and a scribe, it is not always possible to have enough volunteers to do this. Even if you do have a scribe, they are being tasked with taking down a lot of information at a very rapid rate. There is a danger, therefore, that details and information are lost.

An audio recording can be used to supplement the notetaking, allowing the scribe to check back on notes after the event, or simply for the project team to create a transcript of the audio to append to the contribution when it is published online.

### 1.2. ARE WE ALLOWED TO AUDIO RECORD?

Yes, if the contributor has agreed to this by ticking the relevant box on the **Consent and Permissions Form**. They may well ask you why you are recording and what will happen to the recording. You should respond by saying:

- This is to help with notetaking. We will use it to check back on details that we may have missed (e.g. names, dates).
- The project will create a transcript of this recording and possibly make it available, attaching it to your contribution. This transcript will not contain your name or contact details.

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<sup>1</sup> This guide is derived from an original document created for the [RunCoCo](#) project based at the University of Oxford.

- Occasionally the project will use extracts from the recording for research purposes (including presentations on the project). All references to you will be anonymised.

### 1.3. HOW DO I RECORD?

There are a variety of options for capturing live audio. We **strongly recommend** that you capture straight to digital format by the means below i.e. you do not capture to tape (such as old Dictaphones) as these create considerable problems in terms of transferring files to digital. **The project can only accept digital versions of recordings.**

Options available to digitally capture audio recordings are:

- **A computer/laptop with audio capture software** – if using this we recommend that you make sure all other applications are turned off that you have sufficient storage space and battery power on the laptop (or plug into mains power) and that you use an external microphone where possible, i.e. not the one built into the device.
- **A smartphone or tablet device with audio capture software (e.g. voice memo)** – again, if using this method, turn off all other applications, check space and battery, and if possible use an external microphone.
- **A small portable digital voice recorder** – these cost around £40 (extra for an external microphone). The key points to look for here are storage space (minimum of 16GB upwards would be required for a day’s interviewing), ability to connect an external microphone, simple to use, ability record to WAV or MP3 file format, and easy to transfer files. Some will require a standard SanDisk (SD) card where you can store the recordings, as with digital cameras, but others will require that you transfer files from the recorder to a computer via a USB cable (also used for charging).

**Figure 1: Typical audio recorder equipment**



## 1.4. KEY POINTS WHEN AUDIO RECORDING

- 1) Use an **external microphone** wherever possible
- 2) Position the microphone **near to the interviewee** but preferably not in line of sight and away from any unwanted sound (such as computer fans)
- 3) Ensure that your device has **sufficient battery power** or is **connected to the mains**
- 4) Ensure that the recording device has **sufficient space** to capture an interview (1 hour at 44KHz, mono, 16-bit sampling would require 300MB)
- 5) If the device uses an SD card, it may also have some in-built storage. Make sure that the files are being **saved to the SD card** wherever possible
- 6) Ensure that the recording device is set to **capture audio at sufficiently high quality** (see below) and set to **save files ideally to WAV** (MP3 is the fall-back option but this does compress sound so there can be a slight loss in quality)
- 7) **Do a short trial** recording a conversation with someone (e.g. 'What did you have for breakfast?') before each proper interview and play it back at least at the beginning of the event or if there have been any changes (e.g. you have moved desk). Check that the settings are correct and you can hear your voice and, most importantly, the voice of the interviewee clearly. If you cannot hear them, you may need to reposition the microphone or adjust the input volume
- 8) Always **speak towards the microphone**

**IMPORTANT:** Please remember to **read out an introduction at the start of each interview/audio recording** (this will be helpful later when editing). Your introduction should include:

- a) The name of the contributor
- b) The date
- c) The location of the Digital Collection Day
- d) The name of the interviewer

*e.g. 'This is Samantha Smith at the Their Finest Hour Digital Collection Day in Bradford on the 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023, and I am interviewing Alfred Smith ...'*

## 1.5. AUDIO RECORDER SETTINGS

Most recorders will come with default settings which may not need to be changed. As noted above, the most important point is to **test the settings in advance**. Get to know your device, try a quick recording, and listen to it using headphones if possible. Does it sound OK? Are there any background noises you could not hear but are on the recording? Can you hear the conversation?

If you are interested in getting the best quality and are familiar with the device, we would suggest the following key settings:

- For audio voice recording, the recommended quality is 44KHz and 16-bit sampling rate
- Capture the files as .WAV (.AIF/.AIFF on Mac) format which is uncompressed (recording as an MP3 file gives significantly reduced quality)
- Set to mono
- If you are using an external microphone, make sure that your device is set to use that (e.g. Input – Mic/Line)
- Ensure that it is saving the files to the correct space
- Turn features like Auto track, Auto mark, Silent skip, Prerecord to OFF

## 2. GETTING YOUR AUDIO TO US

When the Digital Collection Day (or subsequent interview) is over, you need to share the files with us so that we can process them, create transcripts, and save them securely. We ask that you **share audio files with us via [Dropbox](#)** (a web-based cloud storage service). You can find further details about Dropbox below under the heading, ‘Getting your files to us’.

### 2.1. FILE NAMING AUDIO FILES (OPTIONAL)

If possible, we ask that you to rename the audio file to assist us with matching this up with the other information collected from the contributor. The file-naming protocols that we use for the project are very simple and consist of:

*ID number.fileformat*

The ID number is the unique number attached to/associated with each contribution (see section 3 below). This is usually set at the Welcome Desk on the contributor's arrival and will be written on the **Welcome Desk Tracking Form**, as well as on the top right-hand corner of each form. This ID number consists of a three-letter abbreviation of the location of the event, then a number (starting with ‘001’) for each contributor.

*E.g. the first person coming to an event in Bradford may be given the ID number ‘BRA001’, the second person ‘BRA002’, etc.*

When you look at the audio files that you have created, they will have been given a filename by the device. Usually this is something based on a timestamp or similar, but it may just be a number (e.g. 0001). The filename will also add a suffix to denote the file format (e.g. .wav, or .mp3).

*E.g. An audio recording created at an event is automatically given the filename by the device of '0001.wav' denoting this is the first recording it has made and it has saved it to the WAV format.*

To help the project process contributions more quickly, we would request that filenames are changed to our standard. This is a simple process of replacing the 'name' part (in the above example '0001') with the ID Number.

*E.g. A contributor is given the ID number 'BRA0004' at the Welcome desk. When they are interviewed a recording is made and it saves the file as '0001.wav' or '0001.mp3'. After the event you should rename '0001.wav' to 'BRA0004.wav' using the rename file functions on your device or computer.*

**NOTE:** To distinguish between the standard interview undertaken at the interview desk as part of a collection day, and a possible 'longer interview' conducted at a separate time of the same person, we would request that all 'longer interviews' are saved with a prefix of 'INT'. In the above example then the standard story form interview would be 'BRA0004.wav' but a longer interview with the same person, recorded separately, should be named 'INTBRA0004.wav'.

## 2.2. TRANSFERRING THE FILES

Once you have collected and renamed your audio files, you need to send them to us. Because the files will be quite large in terms of storage size, it will not be possible to email them to us. Instead, you can:

- 1) **Transfer the files using Dropbox (PREFERRED OPTION):** Transfer all the files to a computer, connect the computer to the internet, and share the files with us via our Their Finest Hour Dropbox account.

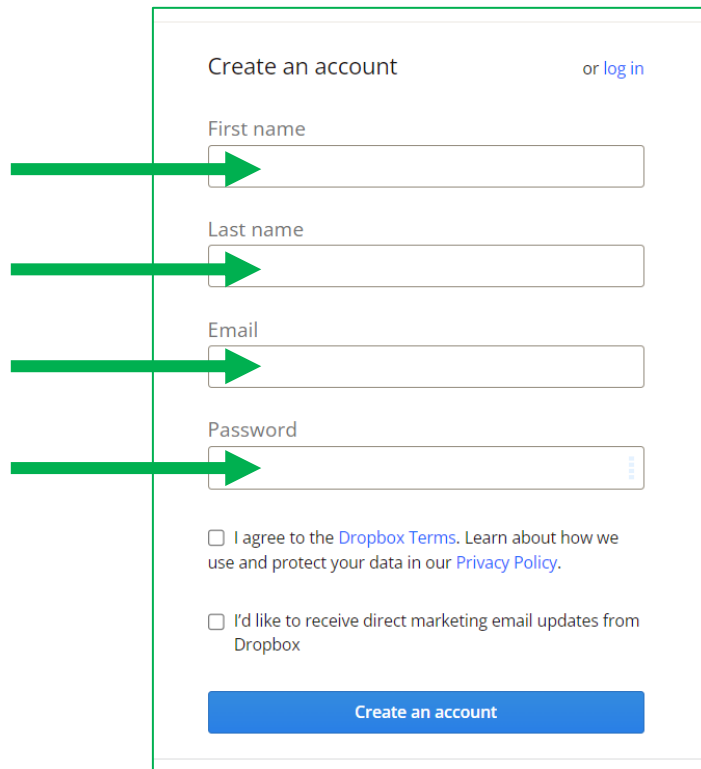
If you **have** an existing Dropbox account, simply click on the following link to be taken to the shared folder ('Their Finest Hour: Audio Recordings') where you can deposit (i.e. drag and drop) your files:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/r5gsazip596dneotopj1u/h?dl=0&rlkey=t7csdqodbep46mhovi0fj47hp>

If you **do not have** an existing Dropbox account, please follow the instructions below:

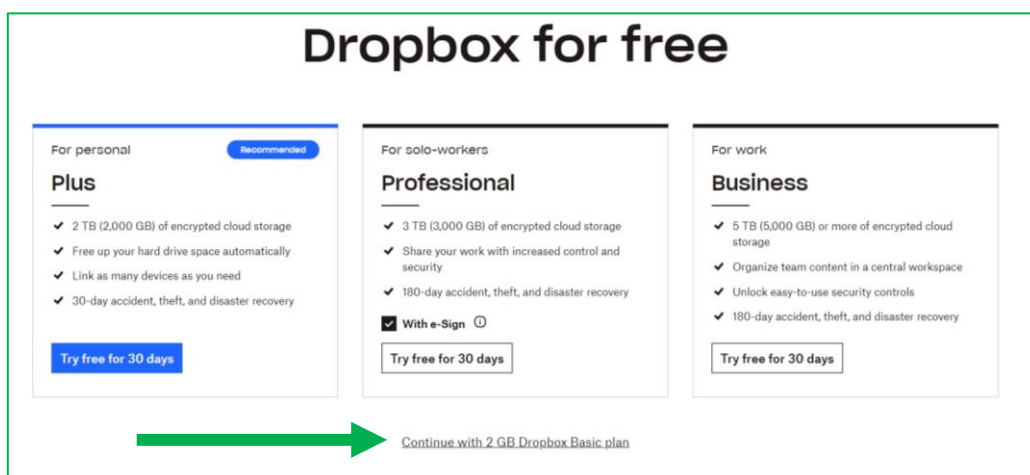
**Step 1: Create a Dropbox account.**

To create your new Dropbox account, please use the following URL: <https://www.dropbox.com/register>. Registering for a Dropbox account is free, and all you need to do is enter a name, email and password of your choice:



The screenshot shows the 'Create an account' form on the Dropbox website. It includes a 'Create an account' link and a 'or log in' link. The form has four input fields: 'First name', 'Last name', 'Email', and 'Password'. Each field has a green arrow pointing to it from the left. Below the input fields are two checkboxes: 'I agree to the Dropbox Terms. Learn about how we use and protect your data in our Privacy Policy.' and 'I'd like to receive direct marketing email updates from Dropbox'. At the bottom is a blue 'Create an account' button.

**Important:** On the next screen you will be asked to select an account type. Please ensure that you scroll down, passed the paid account options, and click on **“Continue with 2GB Dropbox basic plan”** (as shown below):



The screenshot shows the 'Dropbox for free' selection screen. It features three columns of account options: 'Plus' (For personal, Recommended), 'Professional' (For solo-workers), and 'Business' (For work). Each column lists features and a 'Try free for 30 days' button. A green arrow points from the bottom left towards the 'Continue with 2 GB Dropbox Basic plan' link at the bottom center.

You will be asked to answer a question and be given the option to download the Dropbox app, but you do not need to complete either of these steps in order to share your audio files with us - so you can complete or navigate away from these pages as preferred.

You may also be sent an email from Dropbox (to the email address that you used to create your account) with a request for you to “verify” your email – to do this, just follow the prompts.

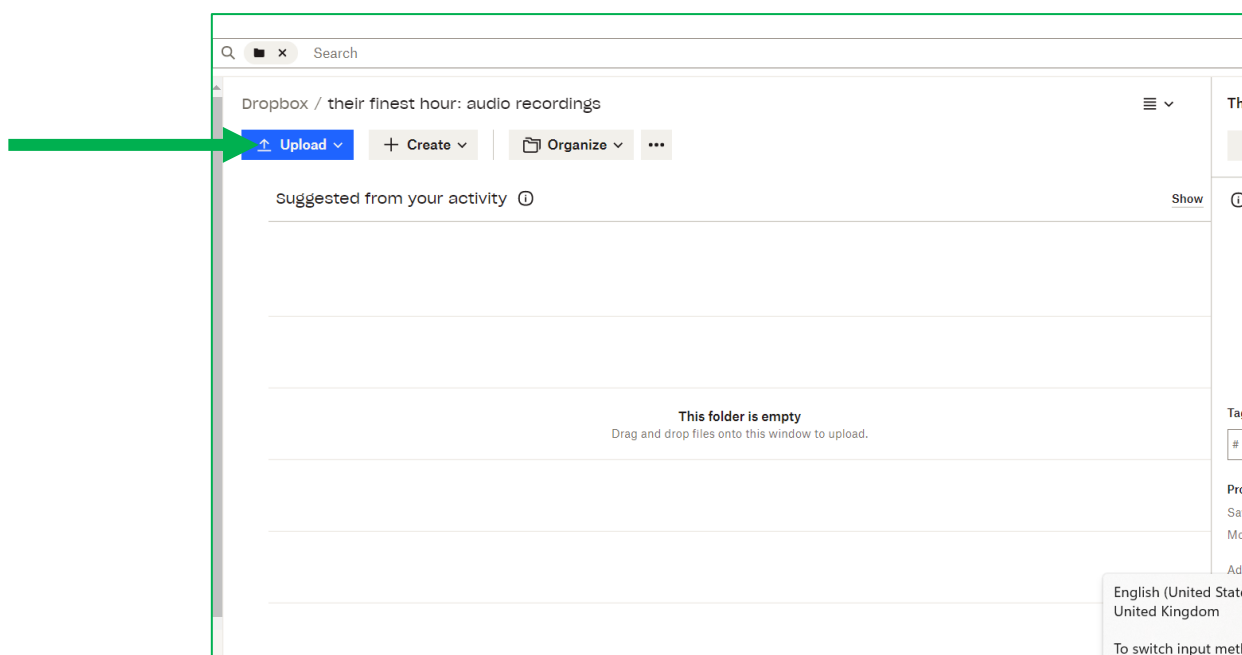
## Step 2: To upload/share

Now that you have created your Dropbox account, to upload/share audio recordings files, you will need to navigate to the shared ‘Their Finest Hour: Audio Recordings’ folder, which can be accessed via the following link: <https://bit.ly/3fZz301> .

Once on the page, click the ‘Add to Dropbox’ button, and sign into your Dropbox account.

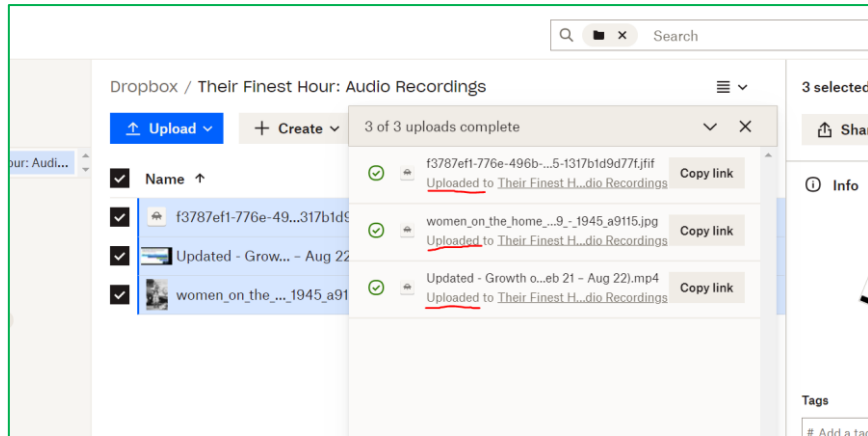
## Step 4: Upload your files

To upload your files, click the ‘Upload’ button as shown below and follow prompts.



Please note that it is possible to select multiple files, and upload them simultaneously, by selecting them while holding the control (Ctrl) key.

You will be able to track the progress of your uploads and see confirmation that upload has been successful on the upload page (*as shown below*).



Please note that once we have accessed and downloaded the files, they will be deleted from this folder – so do not be alarmed if at any stage you find that they are no longer there.

- 2) Alternatively, if you do not want to or cannot use Dropbox, save the files to a memory stick (also known as a USB stick or flash drive) or an SD card and post to us at **Stuart D Lee, IT Services, 13 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6NN.**

If you have any questions about anything in the above, please feel free to contact us directly at [theirfinesthour@ell.ox.ac.uk](mailto:theirfinesthour@ell.ox.ac.uk).