

9000

VOICES

RECORDISTS HANDBOOK

WELCOME

Thank you for getting involved in 900 Voices. This booklet brings together lots of information we think will be useful to your role as a recordist, whether you are going to be making one recording or ten.

900 Voices is a participative project by Zoë Irvine with Lindsay Perth and Jules Rawlinson, leading towards a sound installation in St Giles' Cathedral Edinburgh. It has been commissioned as part of St Giles' momentous 900th anniversary celebrations.

900 Voices is an exploration and celebration of Edinburgh communities. For the whole of 2024 we are recording personal reflections on what gives people a sense of belonging and connection. Motivated by inclusivity, 900 Voices is not a religious project and invites contributions from people across Edinburgh with any and all views.

These recordings will be shared in the sound installation in St Giles' which will launch as part of the Edinburgh Festival in August and run for the rest of the year.

We are also creating a 900 Voices oral history archive with all the recordings we make. This will belong to the Cathedral and also be gifted to a number of national collections. By participating you are contributing to something we hope will provide interesting insights into community narratives and create a legacy of thoughts and voices for generations to come.

PAGE INDEX

Recording Workflow	3
The kit	4 + 5
Preparing to record	6 + 7
What to look out for when recording	8 + 9
Notes on interviewing for 900 Voices	10 - 13
FAQ and Glossary	14 - 17
900Voices Contacts	17

RECORDING WORKFLOW

Before we jump into the how's and what's, let's look at the overall beginning, middle and end of the process.

STEP BY STEP

- 1. Ahead of the recording** - charge up the batteries and check your recorder is working by making a test recording. Check you have CONSENT FORMS or the link to the online consent form.
- 2. On arrival** - check for noise pollution and fix it if you can. If you can't make sure to set up with the mic pointing away from the noise source.
- 3. Attach the tripod** - position the recorder on a table or flat surface close to the interviewee and angle the mic towards them.

Now .. If using the H1e recorder you are good to go.

If using the H5 recorder check your levels and adjust accordingly.

- 4. When recording** for 900 Voices you do not need to wear headphones. It is more important to be present in the conversation.
- 5. When you are ready** press RECORD
- 6. Start each recording** with YOUR NAME, the DATE, LOCATION where you are recording and the NAME of who you are with, then ask them to INTRODUCE THEMSELVES and say a little about who they are.
[For guidance on the content of the conversation see page 10.]
- 7. When you have finished** press STOP
- 8. Make sure to complete** the CONSENT FORM with the interviewee.

THE KIT

Each recording kit contains:

A Zoom H5 recorder or an H1e

2 x SD cards (1 in the recorder plus a spare)

A mini tripod

A pair of headphones

4 AA rechargeable batteries (2 in the recorder plus 2 spare)

A battery charger.



Note, there are two types of recorders, an H5 and an H1e .. [see opposite page for details.](#)

THE RECORDER

For 900 Voices there are two types of sound recorders you might get in your recording kit.

Please check which one you have and follow the appropriate instructions.

To make sure you are familiar with how the recorder works ahead of time make a couple of test recordings and listen back to them through the headphones.

H5 RECORDER



If you are using this recorder you turn this dial to adjust level. See page 6 for more instructions for the H5.

H1e RECORDER

If you are using this recorder you don't need to adjust any levels. See page 7 for more instructions for the H1e.



PREPARING TO RECORD WITH THE H5

- Switch on the recorder by sliding the power switch on the left side down and hold it for a second or so. The screen will come alive.



on/off switch

- Enable the mic input on the recorder by pressing the L button on the front panel.
- Both L and R should now have a red light indicating they are record active.



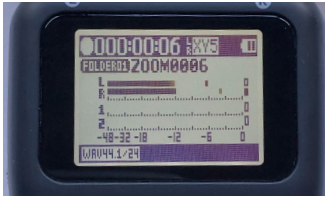
red lights indicate active

- Look at the level metre on the screen, you should see the recorder measuring the sound levels for the microphones.
- To adjust the recorder to the correct sensitivity, ask the interviewee to talk about something like their breakfast, or their day so far. While they do that you watch the metres and adjust the recorder using the input wheel. Move it around until you see the metres hitting around the middle level. That's between -12dB and -6dB.
- Use the wheel at the top of the recorder to adjust the input level until you see a strong level indicated hitting between the -12 and -6 mark for the louder sounds.



input level

- press STOP to finish recording.
- it automatically saves the sound file.



best to keep levels around the middle

- make sure to complete the CONSENT FORM with the interviewee
- press STOP to finish recording.
- it automatically saves the sound file.

And here a **reminder** to make ake sure to complete the CONSENT FORM with the interviewee.



3 lights indicate now recording

PREPARING TO RECORD WITH THE H1E

- Switch on the recorder by sliding the power switch on the left side down and hold it for a second or so. The screen will come alive.
- When you're ready, press record. The red light will indicate it is recording.
- When you are finished press RECORD again. It automatically saves the sound file.

And here a **reminder** to make sure to complete the CONSENT FORM with the interviewee.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR WHEN RECORDING

Choosing where to make the recording. We recommend recording indoors, seated at or near a table where you can easily set up the recorder.

- **Is it quiet?** Listen out for fridges / ticking clocks/ rustling clothing / squeaky furniture
- If there are sounds coming in through the window set up so that the mic will be pointing away from it to minimise disturbance. Occasional sounds are fine.
- Are you and the interviewee going to be comfortable i.e. suitable chairs? Glass of water?

Position the Recorder

- Attach the tripod to the recorder, place it on a table.
- You can tilt the recorder's angle using the red button on the tripod. Please angle the recorder towards the interviewee.

Filling in the Consent Form

A consent form is needed for every recording. Please go through this with the interviewee, making sure they understand it, date it and sign it. This can be discussed ahead of the recording and completed afterwards. Please note, without the consent form we are unable to include the recording. See opposite page for more detail about the consent form.

Recording

When you are ready, press REC to start

Start each recording with YOUR NAME, the DATE, LOCATION where you are recording and the NAME of who you are with, then ask them to INTRODUCE THEMSELVES and say a little about who they are.

For tips on interviewing see page 10.

Finishing up, completing the consent form

When you have come to the end of the conversation press STOP on the recorder (the recording will save automatically).

At this point please go over the consent form with your interviewee and make sure it is signed by both of you.

When you have finished your recording(s), arrange a time with a member of the 900 Voices team to copy over the recording. This can be done when you return the kit or, if you are keeping hold of it for a number of days, we will arrange for you to transfer the recordings.

If you are making more than one recording, be reassured that you cannot record over a file you have already recorded unless you actively delete it, so as long as you have space on the SD Card, where the files are stored, you can carry on to record your next interview.

Please read on for many more tips on recording interviews.

MORE ABOUT THE CONSENT FORM

Each kit should contain a number of printed consent forms when you pick it up. These are for your use. If you do not find any forms or run out, you can download the PDF from 900voices.org/consentform. It is also possible to complete an online consent form, but you must fill this out with your interviewee together. Find this online consent form using the QR code in each kit or at:

900voices.org/online-both-party-consent

Any questions or support required, just email:
hello@900voices.org

NOTES ON INTERVIEWING FOR 900VOICES

We hope that everyone you record has received some information about what we're interested in and what it's for. However before you hit record it is a good idea to run through the CONSENT form, what the project is about and what you are going to be asking them to think about.

Recording a conversation / interviewing can be wonderful, it can also be a bit daunting, both for the interviewer and the interviewee. Handling the tech, making sure the interviewee feels comfortable, getting into the flow - it's not always easy.

SOME PROMPTS AND THOUGHTS TO HELP WHEN INTERVIEWING

- Start every recording by saying the date, your name and where you are.
- Then say who you are recording with and ask them to introduce and say a little bit about themselves. There is nothing specific we're looking for here, so however a person chooses to introduce themselves is fine.
- Please then open the conversation by asking how they would define belonging. Do they use this word? What does it mean to them?
- Is it something they have experienced? If so, what gives them a sense of belonging?
- Belonging can be many things!
- Follow where the conversation goes, ask for more detail. Follow your instincts.
- Then move on to connection. What does connection mean to them? Is it a phrase they use? If so, in what context? How does it relate to or differ from belonging?

- Again once the person has explained a bit about how they would define connection ask them if they have personal experiences of connection/ having a feeling of connection and if so what they are?

Our experiences so far have shown that spending some time talking through these things may lead in all sorts of directions.

There are no rights or wrongs here. These two topics may lead to a full conversation.

IF YOU FIND YOU HAVE TIME ...

If you haven't already, move on to the idea of community.

Again, cover how the person defines and uses the word community and what sort of experiences they have had or would like of community.

It may be important for the person you are talking to to tell you about experiences of not belonging or not feeling connected or part of a community. For many of us these perhaps negative experiences have helped shaped the positive ones, or helped us know what we are looking for.

BEING THE LISTENER

Whenever we record an interview there are various things happening- the conversation, the technical capturing of it 'on tape' and the general *dynamics* of the situation. What?

We can use the word *dynamics* to describe the emotional exchange that goes on in every conversation. It is through the words and beyond the words. It is how something is said and how you hear it. The person you are talking to feels your attention, they feel you are listening. It is not about you coming up with the next things to say, it is about you hearing what they are saying and seeing where it leads.

Don't be afraid of what they might say. Asking about people's lived experience of something valuable and emotional might mean that conversations get deep! Allowing space for emotions or not knowing, or something sad coming up in the conversation can lead to a more truthful encounter.

Alternatively you may be speaking with someone who doesn't want to have a deep and philosophical talk, perhaps they want to keep it light. That's fine too.

Pay close attention to the cues you are receiving and follow your intuition. Each interview is a different balance of guiding through questions, listening, responding and leaving space.

There are no right or wrong questions and no right or wrong answers.

The recordings will be edited. So you don't need to worry about starting again or repeating something. It is also fine if the interviewee decides they would like not to include part of the conversation. There will be an opportunity to review the recording.

LOOKING AFTER YOU

Please don't ever put yourself in any situation you feel unsafe.

We encourage you to only record with people you know and trust in locations where you feel safe. Or if you are recording someone you don't know personally that would be arranged by the 900 Voices team and undertaken in one of our designated recording sessions in either St Giles' Cathedral or an Edinburgh Napier University campus.

Only give out your personal details if you feel comfortable to do so.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE RECORDINGS?

Every recording will be transcribed. This is done using an online software called Trint, which is state of the art technology. However each transcription is checked closely by a member of the 900 Voices team before it is lodged into the project archive.

The recordings and transcriptions will be shared with the interviewee if they have requested it. Both the interviewer and interviewee then have a few days to request any edits, this would generally be to remove any parts of the conversation they do not wish to share.

Once approved the interview will go through an edit process where selections will be made for inclusion in the sound installation.

The interview will be part of the 900 Voices oral history collection.

FAQS

Does 900 Voices organise who I'll interview?

In the first instance we are keen that you record with people you know, so you will be setting it up in a time and place that suits you. Then we will offer to set up additional recordings if you would like to do that.

How long should each interview be?

We do not have a set time, we suggest arranging to spend 30 mins to record each interview but the conversation may draw to a natural conclusion after about 10 minutes or it might be better to record for longer. As the interviewer we trust you'll follow your instinct.

What if the interviewee speaks in a dialect or language other than English?

That is great, we welcome contributions in other languages, so as long as you the interviewer are happy to conduct the interview in the same language or you have someone who can translate.

Are there consent forms in different languages?

Yes, please let us know in advance and we will make sure you have the translation you need.

Is 900 Voices faith based?

No, it isn't. Motivated by inclusivity, 900 Voices invites contributions from people across Edinburgh with any and all views.

Can I make a recording with more than one person at a time?

Yes you can, it can be more tricky to set up. If you are recording more than two people get in touch and we'll accommodate it if we can.

Can I make a recording outside?

Making recordings outside may be fine, make sure to find a quiet spot and use the sponge windshield (H5 recorder only). Recordings with background noise will not be included in the installation.

If you have a specific scenario in mind, talk it over with the 900 Voices team in advance.

How should I handle any sensitive topics that come up in the recording?

If the interviewee seems OK, it is fine to carry on, especially as they will be given the opportunity to edit afterwards, however if the interviewee does not seem OK stay calm and ask them if they would like to take a break or end the interview. It is a good idea to note this down on the consent form and speak to the 900 Voices team about it.

What should I do if someone tells me sensitive information?

Let a member of the 900 voices team know. We can refer them (and you) to city wide resources if relevant.

What happens if an interviewee wants to retract something they said after the interview?

No problem, make sure they make that selection on the consent form and they will be given the opportunity to indicate what they would like to remove.

What happens if I don't feel comfortable with the direction a conversation is going?

If you are feeling uncomfortable, look after yourself first and draw the conversation to a close, leave and get in touch with a member of the 900 Voices team.

What happens if the batteries run out in the middle of an interview?

Replace the batteries with the spare set provided. The recorder should have saved the recording so far, you can check by pressing play and seeing if it has. If you do, you can pick up from where it cuts off. If not... you can decide whether you want to repeat or recap.

Don't worry about it.

Uh Oh, I've fiddled with the buttons, how can I reset the recorder to the correct settings?

See the recordist's page on 900voices.org or get in touch with a member of the 900 Voices team.

What if something from the recording kit gets broken or lost?

Get in touch.

GLOSSARY

Consent Form: A document that interviewees and interviewers sign to give permission for their voice recording to be used in the project. Going through the consent form ensures interviewees understand and agree to how their contributions will be used. Without this form their recording cannot be included.

Edit: For 900 Voices the edit process will select audio segments for inclusion in the sound installation.

Interviewee: The person being interviewed for the 900 Voices project.

Interviewer: The volunteer who conducts the interview in the 900 Voices project.

Levels: The volume level at which sound is recorded. This determines the quality of the recording. Too quiet and we will hear too much of the surroundings when the signal is boosted, too loud and the signal is distorted and unusable.

Adjust the input level so that the peak is hitting between the -12dB and -6dB (the middle) area when metering on the screen. In our experience we find the *Input Dial needs to be set at around 9.*

L/R Microphones: Refers to the Left and Right built-in microphones on top of the recorder, used for capturing sound. These microphones are directional.

SD Card: A removable memory card used in the recorder for storing audio files.

Transcription: The process of converting spoken words from the interviews into written text.

CONTACT

If you have any questions at any time drop us an email:

hello@900voices.org

Zoë Irvine, Creative Director: zoe@900voices.org
Lindsay Perth, Social Engagement: lindsay@900voices.org

Becky Milling, Assistant Producer: hello@900voices.org

Sarah Phemister, Head of Heritage and Culture, St Giles' Cathedral:
sarah.phemister@stgilescathedral.org.uk

