

Can Digital Recording Really Replace Court Reporting?

[Court reporting](#) is both a skill and an art. Court reporters are trained professionals who must exhibit dedication, professionalism, and most importantly, proficiency in their line of work. Technology is now threatening to make the job of the stenographer obsolete. But is a digital recording really better than a human court reporter?

The advantages of audio recordings of [depositions](#) are almost entirely based on the costs. Stenographers cost more to hire than an automated system does to set up and run. However, the up-front costs of implementing a recording system are expensive and they cost more to replace if they break. The question then becomes how an automated system compares with a live court reporter otherwise. In terms of the quality of service you get, court reporting is undoubtedly better. With a stenographer, you get a trained professional with experience in the legal field which an audio technician may not possess. Also, when you record a deposition, someone is still going to have to make a transcript out of the material. With [realtime](#) court reporting, a stenographer can produce a rough copy of testimony instantly, and the official transcript can be expedited as well.

Some have sited human error and irresponsibility as a reason for converting to automated systems. A court reporter can misplace files or lose transcripts. However, just because a machine is doing more of the legwork doesn't mean that human error cannot come into play. If the audio tech misses something important or forgets to hit a button, the result will be the same, but a stenographer has more incentive to get it right the first time. And technology can fail as well. A stenographer's computer could crash or the automated system could fail because of an electrical problem. The difference is that court reporting at least provides a copy of the transcript, even if a computer isn't working, which the automated system doesn't. The automated technology that is available today still has substantial flaws. There is a significant lag time between the feedback of audio and the translation of the words therein and automatic recording does not include any punctuation, making initial viewing both delayed and somewhat incomprehensible.

One of the biggest complaints about automated systems is that the recordings are not always clear. When a recording is made, many things can interfere with the sound quality and obscure the dialogue. If someone is speaking very quietly or several people are talking at once, if someone has a heavy accent, if papers are being shuffled or people in the room are whispering a lot it can distort the sound of a witness and you can lose important testimony. Voice recognition technology is intended to correct this problem, but the most advanced form still needs time to build a profile for each person and is only able to handle about four people. A stenographer can ask a witness to speak up or ask for clarification of an indistinct statement and ensure that nothing is missed or left to guesswork.

Aside from being marginally cheaper in the long run, automated systems have no advantages over [court reporting services](#). Stenographers are easily more accurate and efficient than any recording capabilities that exist today. With automated services, you leave the law in the hands of a video technician and the record at the mercy of circumstance and post-deposition editing. In the legal field, that's a chance that you can't afford to take.

888.893.3767
WWW.DEPOTEXAS.COM