

Oral History Supplies

Audio Recorder (two recommendations)

1. Tascam DR-40 4-Track Handheld Digital Audio Recorder

Provides professional-level features and flexibility in a compact and durable design that's ideal for use in the field. The unit can record high-quality WAV/BWF or MP3 files to readily-available SD or SDHC flash memory cards, allowing you to record hours of material and share it easily. A 2GB card is included so you can get started recording right away.

The recorder features built-in adjustable condenser microphones, allowing you to choose an X/Y or A/B recording pattern to meet the needs of your environment and application. A built-in limiter and switchable low cut filter reduce peaks and rumble for cleaner recordings. There are a pair of Neutrik combo inputs that accept XLR and 1/4" connections for terrific flexibility. Built-in mic preamps provide phantom power so you can use external condenser mics. A 3.5mm headphone/line output allows you to connect additional equipment such as headphones or small speakers. The high-speed USB 2.0 port allows you to transfer your recordings to a Mac or PC for editing or sharing.

A built-in speaker allows you to play back your recordings immediately for review. Other features include a dual recording mode, and overdub mode, and a peak reduction feature. There is a 2-second pre-recording buffer to ensure that you never miss a priceless moment due to pressing the record button too late. There is also a chromatic tuner and a stereo reverb effect. A threaded mounting hole lets you mount the recorder on a tripod for terrific stability. The DR-40 can operate for up to 15 hours from 3 standard AA batteries. It can also use USB bus power via the included cable. An optional AC adapter and external battery pack (sold separately) provide additional powering options.

2. Marantz PMD620 Professional Handheld Digital Audio Recorder

A lightweight handheld recorder ideal for field recording, interviews, podcasts, and more. The unit allows you record stereo WAV or MP3 files with the touch of a button. Because the PMD620 uses SD cards as a storage medium, it's easy to swap cards so you never run out of storage space.

Designed for easy one-handed operation, the recorder has an intuitive interface with a bright OLED screen, allowing you to work under any lighting conditions. Non-destructive editing is built in for making quick edits without needing extra equipment. For more in-depth editing, you can transfer your audio to your Mac or PC via the high-speed USB 2.0 port.

The rugged, lightweight construction is built to withstand the trials and tribulations of life on the road. Play back your audio over the built-in speaker, or plug in a pair of headphones for private listening. Line and mic-level input jacks allow you to record from sources other than the built-in mic capsules. A line out jack lets you connect to a mixing board or professional monitoring system.

Microphones (2)

Best ones are the small “lavalier” type that clips onto clothing or hangs around neck. They pick up the interviewee's voice without much interference. One for the interviewee and one for the interviewer. Prices range from \$19.95 to \$27.95 at Radio Shack.

Microphone splitter

Microphones plug into the splitter and the splitter plugs into the tape recorder input jack. Price is \$2.99 at Radio Shack.

Tapes

Sixty minute cassettes are best. They are the thickest (1.5 mils) and consequently are less likely to snag or break. Take an extra along just in case. Avoid the cheap no-name or discount variety. Buy cassettes that are fastened together with screws (they can be repaired), not the glued together type. Price ranges from \$2 to \$4.

Notebook

A stenographers pad is good since it has two columns. One can be used for the questions and interview subjects while the other can be used to jot notes on the responses.

Extension cord

Outlets are never where you need them. Take an extension cord along.

Batteries

You may need extra batteries – both for the tape recorder and for the microphones. Take them along in case you do. Do not use batteries in the tape recorder unless there is no outlet handy.

Interview questions

Take along an outline of how you want to conduct the interview. Include a list of questions or subjects for the interview in the order in which you plan to use them. Be flexible, however; you may have to adjust to the interviewee.

Release form

Use when interviewing people other than family members or in cases where you plan to publish or broadcast the results.