

# **Kelly Hughes Video Depositions**

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## **Experience**

I developed and ran the video department of a local court reporting firm, and for the three years there, I was the primary shooter. I left that position because the company was sold and moved out of state. A few years later, I went solo as contract shooter, and I've been doing that for over 3 years now. I'm the first-choice shooter at several firms.

## **Technique**

After years of processing the work of other shooters, I am well aware of the mistakes made by other videographers. I designed my kit and processes to eliminate them. My work represents me, so I want it to be as good as possible.

My kit is designed so that all devices form a single chain, with audio and video monitored at the end of the chain. This makes it nearly impossible to unknowingly make a recording with missing audio or video. See diagram next page.

I deliver DVD masters exclusively, to avoid quality problems associated with magnetic tapes and head alignment. I record directly to a pair of hard drive recorders and masters are dubbed to discs *after* the deposition, so the occasional "coaster" won't cause a problem mid-depo. Audio and video *never* slip out of sync on my mpeg-1 files, even on four hour clips.

I continuously monitor the deposition in headphones to be certain every question and answer is intelligible. I adjust audio levels as needed throughout the depo, and I use EQ controls on each mic channel to make each speaker sound as good as I can. I have extra mics and six XLR inputs so I can mic a telephone or extra attendees easily. Naturally, Buzzkillers are at every job, and I even have windjammers for very breathy speakers (and they help with long hair, too).

All my discs are sector-by-sector verified before delivery. I keep backups of all my depositions too, so getting another copy of a disc is easy, should yours get stepped on, lost in transit, or whatever. I have my own internet servers and a faster-than-usual connection, so getting large files around without email is commonplace for me.

As a convenience for the court reporter, I record audio on standard cassettes (always new) and can also record in digital MP3/WAV format, available at the conclusion of the deposition on SD flash cards or transferable over USB. Line level audio output is available for the reporter's equipment.

## **Additional Notes**

I carry an extensive set of backup equipment, in case of field failures. This includes another pro-grade 3CCD camcorder, audio mixing console, mics, Marantz cassette deck, and a spare TV monitor. No single piece of equipment failure can prevent me from finishing the depo, following a quick run to the car.

My equipment remains pre-wired on my cart, reducing setup time to about ten minutes. The equipment platform is removable, so it can sit on the table with rubber feet, in case there isn't room for the cart in the conference room.

I take scheduling very seriously. Once I accept a job, I'm committed to it. If an offer from another firm comes along, I won't drop the job back in your lap at the last minute.

I don't work directly for attorneys, so I have no incentive to "poach" your clients. I am a notary, so I'm qualified to administer non-steno depositions.

## **Pricing**

Shoots: \$60 per hour, with two hour minimum. No travel charge within 30 miles of downtown Houston or 30 miles of Katy. I will travel anywhere in the state, with fees negotiable. I don't take jobs that require airline travel currently.

## Equipment

Camera: Canon GL-2, 3CCD, backup is Sony VX2000  
Lav Mics: Audio Technica 831R x 7  
Table Mics: AT Pro42 cardioid x 2  
Mixer: Peavey PV10, backup is Yamaha MG102c

Video recorder: Panasonic DMR-EH67, backup is EH59  
Cassette recorder: Marantz PMD-201, same for backup  
Digital audio recorder: Zoom H4n



## Single Chain Hookup

My equipment is set up in a way that it forms a single audio chain, and a single video chain. This Single Chain technique gives my kit a simpler layout that's easier to understand and troubleshoot, but even more importantly, it makes it nearly impossible for me to make a recording with missing audio or video. The video I watch on the monitor has been through every recorder, and the audio I monitor in my headphones has been through every recording device. If any cable is bad, or any device is on the wrong input, then I know it immediately.

## **Diagram of my kit using single chains for audio and video**

### Benefits of Dual Hard Drive Recording

I don't use the camera's tape to record -- I have a pair of hard drive equipped DVD recorders doing the task. It makes my kit a little heavier having an extra deck, but there are several advantages:

- No risk of a master recording getting wrapped around a pinch roller or capstan.
- No chance of pixelated video due to dirty heads or alignment differences with your camera.
- No blank tape charges to pass on, and no tapes for me to stock.
- No need to stop for tape changes during the depo. I divide the depo into DVDs after the depo is finished, based on the breaks they took. Most attorneys love this.
- I make SP/2hr and LP/4hr discs at the same time, so you can deliver a four hour depo to your client on a single DVD if you want, with no re-encoding to degrade video quality. Natively recorded LP video is indistinguishable from SP video with my equipment.