ERICFONDREN.COM

Local transcription

Turn recordings into text on your own Mac, with nothing uploaded. By Eric Fondren

What it does

You give your AI assistant a recording. It gives you back the words as text.

It works with voice memos, meeting recordings, interviews, dictations, podcasts and video files. You get two files for each recording:

- A plain text file with everything that was said.
- A subtitle file (.srt) with a timestamp on each line, so you can find the moment something was said or add captions to a video.

Example: Dana records a 40-minute client interview in Voice Memos. She tells her assistant "transcribe the interview I recorded this morning." About five minutes later she has `interview.txt` and `interview.srt` in her transcripts folder.

Your audio stays on your computer

The transcription runs on your Mac. Your recordings are never sent to a website, an online service or the AI company. That makes it a good fit for private conversations, health notes, legal calls and anything else you would not upload.

Your AI assistant only sees the finished text if you ask it to read or summarize it.

The one thing that uses the internet is the first-time setup, which downloads the free transcription software and its speech model.

What you need

- A Mac with Apple Silicon (M1 or newer). Older Intel Macs are not supported.
- Claude Code or Codex on that Mac.

- About 2 GB of free disk space. The speech model is about 1.5 GB.
- Homebrew, a free tool for installing Mac software. If you don't have it, your assistant will tell you how to install it. It asks for your Mac password, so you run that one step yourself.

There is no account to create and nothing to pay for.

How to start

1. Download the zip and unzip it.
2. Give the folder to your assistant and say "Set up this skill using its README."
3. Answer its one question: where to save transcripts. The default is a "transcripts" folder inside Downloads.
4. Start it any time. In Claude Code type `/transcribe-audio`. In Codex type `$transcribe-audio`. You can also just say it in your own words, such as "transcribe my latest voice memo" or "transcribe the recording on my Desktop."

What to expect

The first run takes longer. Your assistant installs the transcription software and downloads the speech model. Plan on several minutes, more on a slow connection. It tells you before it starts. Later runs skip this step.

Speed. Transcription runs several times faster than the length of the recording. A 10-minute memo takes a minute or two. A 2-hour recording takes roughly 15 to 30 minutes. For long recordings your assistant runs the job in the background and tells you when it's done.

Several files. You can ask for more than one at a time. They run one after another.

Where transcripts go. Each recording becomes two files with the same name as the recording, saved in the folder you chose at setup. Your assistant tells you the exact paths when it finishes. To save one transcript somewhere else, say so: "transcribe this and put it in my Projects folder."

Voice Memos

You don't need to find the file yourself. Describe the memo the way you remember it: "the long one from Friday," "this morning's memo" or "the 2-minute one from yesterday." Your assistant looks through your Voice Memos by date and length and checks with you if more than one could match.

The first time, your Mac may block access to the Voice Memos folder. If so, your assistant will ask you to turn on Full Disk Access for your terminal app in System Settings, under Privacy & Security. You do this once.

Tips and limits

- **Good at:** clear English speech, long recordings, files from phones, cameras and video calls (m4a, mp3, wav, mov, mp4 and most others).
- **Harder for it:** heavy background noise, people talking over each other, and very quiet speakers. Expect more mistakes there.
- **It expects English.** Recordings in other languages come out poorly.
- **It does not label speakers.** The text does not say who said what.
- **It gives you the transcript only.** Ask your assistant afterward if you want a summary, action items or a cleaned-up version.
- **If it seems stuck:** long files take time, so ask your assistant how far along it is before you stop it. If setup failed, ask it to run the README checks again. It will tell you what is missing.