

## **About using iPhones/iTouches for project supervision**

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# About using iPhones/iTouches for project supervision

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## What is it?

The *iPhone* or *iTouch* lends itself to capturing tutor-student project supervision conversations. The *iPhone/iTouch* audio *Recorder Pro* app is an easy-to-use audio memo application that enables users to record project supervision meetings lasting up to about half an hour. The recordings can be emailed as an attachment to the student using a wireless network, so providing the student with an accessible way to re-engage with what was said.

## Why use it?

Project supervision conversations are valuable 'feedback rich' encounters, but their benefits can be lost if good notes are not made.

Sometimes points are not fully understood at the time and note-making can get in the way of the conversation. Recording, therefore, allows the student to reflect on what was said and pick up on points later. Not all project supervision meetings are formal events; sometimes they are serendipitous, occurring in corridors, laboratories, lecture theatres, etc. The *Recorder Pro* app on the *iPhone* or *iTouch* provides a convenient, discrete and easy tool in the hands of the academic or the student, wherever they are. Students in the past have reported how recording conversations and listening back to them has helped them to improve their conversational skills and vocabulary (Nortcliffe & Middleton 2007).

## What's involved?

### How to use it

Either the academic or the student needs to own an *iPhone* or *iTouch* v3 (or more recent) with the *Recorder Pro* app bought and installed from the *iTunes* app store. The *iPhone/iTouch* Mail, Contacts and Calendar configuration needs to be synced to the producer's institutional email account. Ideally, intended recipients of the audio recordings need to be added to the producer's *iPhone/iTouch* Contacts to make it easy to locate email addresses following the recording. *Recorder Pro* settings need to be adjusted to enable the app to record and distribute conversations lasting up to half an hour, and *Recorder Pro*'s quality settings need to be adjusted to AIFF audio format. If it is expected that the recordings will be long it may be best to set the quality to low (8 kHz) to reduce the file size, but a judgement about audio quality will need to be made beforehand. Both parties need to have *Quicktime* installed on their PC or laptop to listen back to the *Recorder Pro* recordings. However, if the student or academic has an *iPhone*, *iTouch*, or other smart phone synced to their email account, they can use that to play the recording.



## Production and distribution

At the start of each project supervision meeting the person who owns the device needs to remember to select the *Recorder Pro* app, and press the red button to start the audio recording. The *iPhone* needs to be held or placed where it can capture both parties' voices. The academic should start by introducing the recording: its focus, the meeting date, and purpose. The session can then proceed as normal, uninhibited by the device. At the end of the conversation the file should be paused, an appropriate filename entered and saved, and then sent to the required recipients (usually the student and the project supervisor) using the send button. The email addresses can be selected from the device's Contacts list. *Recorder Pro* populates the email automatically with a default message; however, the sender can amend this. A large half hour recording will typically be about 8MB and will take about half a minute to send before the app will be ready to record again. Ideally the file is sent over a wireless or 3G network. If there is a loss of network the file will remain in the email outbox and will be sent later upon network reconnection. The audio will be received as an email attachment later.

## Adapting this approach

This approach is best kept simple. It may be sufficient in some situations for the academic and the student to record a short summary of what was discussed. Where large recordings are needed, it may be best to make multiple recordings instead.

## Further Information

**Dava Consulting**, "Recorder Pro", available at iTunes store, <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/recorder-pro/id290854227?mt=8>

**Nortcliffe, A. L. & Middleton, A.** (2007). 'Audio Feedback for the iPod Generation' in proceedings of International Conference on Engineering Education, Coimbra, Portugal, 2007

**Nortcliffe, A. L. & Middleton, A.** (2009). 'Understanding effective models of audio feedback' in Ed Rajarshi Roy (ed.) Engineering education perspectives, issues and concerns, Shipra Publications, India

### 10 Tips

1. Agree with the student beforehand who will record and share the conversation.
2. Setup the iPhone to receive and send emails and install *Recorder Pro*.
3. Practise using *Recorder Pro* and check that you are able to send, receive and play the recordings beforehand.
4. Remember to record every project supervision meeting.
5. Keep the supervision session recording to under half an hour.
6. Remember to hold or place the device where it will capture both voices clearly.
7. Speak audibly and clearly and explain visual references.
8. Email audio file as soon as the conversation has finished so that recordings do not get forgotten.
9. Encourage the student to listen back to the recording, reflect upon it and take specific actions.
10. Keep an eye on battery life and adjust settings such as screen brightness as necessary.

### Just iPhones? Just Recorder Pro?

Other recording apps are available for a range of smartphones. Some apps are free and have different functionality.



