

## Choosing a Court Reporting Method

*Baton Rouge School of Court Reporting, an online school that teaches both machine and voice court reporting, compares court reporting methods and offers suggestions on how to choose.*

Baton Rouge, LA ([PRWEB](#)) August 25, 2011 -- When deciding to train to become a court reporter, students want to know the difference between [machine court reporting \(steno\)](#) and [voice court reporting \(mask\)](#), according to Karen Vornkahl, Administrative Director of [Baton Rouge School of Court Reporting \(BRSCR\)](#), an online school that teaches both machine and voice.

Says Vornkahl: "In a nutshell, machine writing uses a steno machine and realtime transcription software to produce an instant output. A voicewriter uses his/her voice as the input method, and improved speech recognition software allows for voice realtime output similar to what a machine writer produces."

She says that since machine writing is a skill requiring muscle memory, like typing or playing the piano, it can take four to six months of theory instruction (learning the keys and how to combine the keystrokes) followed by several years of repetitive practice to build speed. According to Vornkahl, "It takes a real commitment to complete machine school."

With voicewriting, because most everyone is able to talk -- and talk fast when necessary -- the training focuses on learning to listen and talk at the same time, plus time spent training the speech software, a process completed over approximately nine months. Vornkahl believes a well-rounded program also includes a full array of academic courses for either method.

So how does a prospective student know which is better? According to Vornkahl, in the legal community, "machine writing is still the gold standard in court reporting," being relatively unobtrusive and quiet. A voicewriter may produce a slight "hmm" sound in a close space while talking softly into the mask. Some attorneys find it distracting, while others may not notice or care.

"There is a place for both methodologies in the workplace," according to Vornkahl, and choosing the best option depends on factors like how much time the student has to devote to school, their work plans once they achieve certification, their stage of their work life, finances, where they live, and the level of prestige they require from their profession.

"Someone younger with parental backing may choose machine writing in expectation of a long career using state-of-the-art machine technology." It is Vornkahl's opinion that with sufficient available time to devote to achieving certification, most court reporters would elect to be machine writers, knowing that machine writing is the prestige methodology and that machine writers are typically preferred over voice writers in competitive employment situations. In addition, she says some states or jurisdictions do not allow voice writing as an accepted court reporting methodology, so location is a prime consideration when choosing a method.

Vornkahl says someone with less time available to complete training, more limited financial resources, who maybe is later in their work career, or who has physical limitations that prevent machine writing (carpal tunnel syndrome, for example) may choose voicewriting, understanding that it is a less preferred but quicker method of achieving certification as a court reporter. Certification can be relatively "easy" for voice writing compared to machine writing, but the day-to-day use of speech recognition can be more frustrating for voice writing



compared to machine. Training the software is crucial to success.

Vornkahl says a properly trained court reporter using machine or voice will be paid the same for their work. What may be different between the methods is access to work that is available based on attorneys sometimes preferring machine writers to voicewriters. This bias in the legal community may change as voice technology continues to evolve, but a prospective student should know that it exists.

For more information about machine writing versus voice writing, contact a school that offers both modalities.

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