TranscriptPad [Part 1] – Import, View, and Search Transcripts on Your iPad

1

March 15, 2018 Brett Burney

Apps in Law: TranscriptPad [Part 1]
Apps in Law
www.appsinlaw.com
TranscriptPad
Part 1

Download TranscriptPad ($89.99)

This is Part 1 of my review of TranscriptPad which is an iPad-ONLY app to manage, search, annotate, and summarize transcript text files.

If you've ever worked with transcripts before on your computer, you've probably used software like TextMap from Lexis, or Case Notebook from Westlaw. If you've been practicing for a while, you may have used RealLegal or LiveNote many years ago, which were both acquired by Thomson Reuters and subsequently incorporated into their Case Notebook product.

But even in law firms today where I see them using TextMap or Case Notebook, I only see them using those applications to STORE transcripts, and maybe search them.

But when lawyers want to ANNOTATE them or MARK THEM UP, they PRINT THEM OUT!

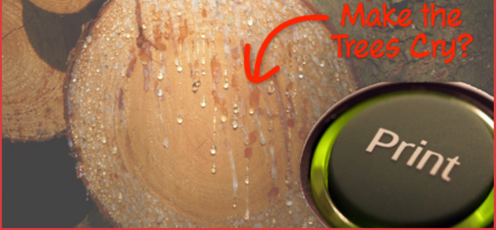
Search

Sign-up for new app reviews and a free PDF download!

You'll also get an immediate PDF download called "Smarter Safari Surfing" that details 3 of the most helpful tips I've found for surfing web pages on your iPhone and iPad.

Apps in Law Smarter Safari Surfing!

Your E-Mail Address
First name
Last name
Yes I want more app reviews!



Then they write notes in the margins, or use a highlighter to mark important sections, or put little sticky notes / Post-it notes to mark important pages.

And to summarize a transcript, I see many folks open the text transcript on one side of their screen, and a blank Microsoft Word document on the other side of their screen. They read through the transcript, and when they find an important section or Q&A pair, they copy the text from the transcript and then paste it into the Word document. Thus creating a “summary” of the transcript.

That’s where TranscriptPad becomes a compelling tool for litigators – instead of going through all of the extra time and expense of printing out a transcript to mark it up, or laboriously copying-and-pasting text into a Word document, you can do ALL of this EASILY in TranscriptPad on your iPad.

Different File Formats

Before we get into the functionality of the app, we need to briefly discuss the different formats of transcripts today so you know EXACTLY what you need in order to use TranscriptPad.

Every court reporter today using a stenographer’s machine connects it to a laptop computer which transcribes their shorthand to plain text.

The exported text file (.TXT file) is the fundamental file format in which transcripts are created and transported today. A .TXT file can be opened on any computer in basic software like Notepad in Windows, or TextEdit on a Mac.

You’ll sometimes hear the .TXT file referred to as an ASCII text file based on an ancient standard created during the telegraph age.

Every transcript is originally created as a text file with a .TXT extension. If you are told that there is no text file available for a transcript, they’re either trying to make it hard for you, or there’s legitimately no way to get the original file.

There is also an “e-transcript” file format that must be specially created by court reporters with special software they have to purchase from Thomson Reuters. An e-transcript file has a .PTX extension which you can open using the free E-Transcript Viewer on your Windows computer, OR using the free Westlaw E-Transcript iPad app that I reviewed previously for Apps in Law.

An e-transcript file will NOT work in TranscriptPad. If you do receive a .PTX e-transcript file, you CAN open the e-transcript file on your computer in the free E-Transcript Viewer software, and save the file out as a .TXT file.

Lastly, you could be offered a PDF version of a transcript. Be aware that this is NOT the original transcript file, and that PDF file had to be created from the original .TXT file at some point.

The .TXT transcript file from a court reporter has specific encoded characters for page and line breaks, and these characters do not translate when the text file is converted to PDF.

TranscriptPad cannot fully use a PDF version of a transcript because these page and line breaks are missing.

And for those of you that are proficient in working with PDFs, you can NOT simply take a PDF file and export it out to a text file – that file won't work in TranscriptPad.

Create a Folder / Case

The first step in using TranscriptPad is to open the app and create your case folder, so that you have a destination when you import transcripts.

There's a convenient button for this – the folder with a plus button.

I recommend using Grid View (vs. the "Large Icon View") because you can see what you're looking for quickly. Plus you can now color-code your folders, so for example, you can have the same color of folders for a specific client.

Tap on the folder once to select a case, and then you can change its color from the left-pane menu.

If you need to re-name a case or delete it, tap and hold on the case to access the secondary menu.

To OPEN a case, you'll need to double-tap the folder, but we'll come back to that in just a moment.

Import a Transcript

There are 3 primary methods for importing transcripts into TranscriptPad:

1) First you typically receive transcripts from court reporters via email. On the iPad, you can tap the .TXT file to open it in the default iPad file viewer, but you can use the Share menu to open the transcript in the TranscriptPad app.

TranscriptPad will ask you what matter, or case folder you want to import the transcript into, or you can create a new matter.

2) Second method, you can use the iTunes software on your computer to transfer a transcript from your computer over to your iPad. You'll have to plug your iPad into your computer, open the iTunes software, select the TranscriptPad app in iTunes, and then you can copy the file from your computer over to your iPad.

(Check out this recent blog post from Lit Software that describes the process.)

3) Last method, you can use a cloud-based storage service to transfer transcripts into TranscriptPad such as Dropbox, Box, Citrix ShareFile, etc. (the developer promises that Google Drive and Microsoft OneDrive are coming soon).

Just tap the cloud icon in the left panel with the arrow pointing down and then select the appropriate cloud storage service. You may have to provide your login credentials to authenticate to the service but then you can navigate to the files you need to import.

Viewing a Transcript

TranscriptPad lets you select a font for reading your transcripts. You change this from the main case page by tapping the "info" button in the upper left corner.

You can elect to have Questions in bold, and answers in regular type, which I find amazingly helpful – I can't read a transcript any other way.

Once you double-tap a folder to jump into a case, you can find your transcript there and simply tap to open it in the main reading window.

Most folks read transcripts with their iPad in "landscape" mode so that you can see the files and issues on the left panel.

But if you rotate the iPad into "portrait" mode, TranscriptPad automatically puts the transcript into full screen mode which is a nice touch.

Importing Exhibits

You can also import exhibits into TranscriptPad.

Exhibits must be PDF files and you can organize them into different folders inside each case, even color-coding the folders to make them stand out. And you can add little icons to each folder. Just select the folder, and then tap "rename" if you'd like to change the folder color, name, or icon.

Unfortunately, you can't link to exhibits from inside a transcript, but TranscriptPad DOES keep your place in the transcript when you jump out to look at an exhibit – when you come back to the transcript t you can keep reading from the same location – you don't have to scroll around to find your place.

But if you jump OUT of the app, you'll have to start from the beginning of the transcript.

Moving Around and Scrolling through a Transcript

TranscriptPad offers several methods for navigating your transcript.

1) The easiest method is simply use your finger to scroll up or down, and you can quickly see what page and line number you're reading in the left margin.

2) Second, there's a slider on the right side that allows you to quickly zip to a specific page – as you slide your finger up and down, it shows you the page and line numbers which is extremely helpful.

3) And right above and below that slider are "Page Up" and "Page Down" arrows which will jump you forward or back a page at a time.

4) Next you can jump to a specific page by tapping the page/line indicator in the top right corner. The keyboard comes up with the onscreen number keyboard and so you can quickly type the page number and hit "Return."

5) Lastly, there's an "Aut0-Scroll" function in the bottom left. Tapping this starts the transcript automatically scrolling and you can adjust the speed with the slider there.

This was designed to make it easy for you to read through a transcript with minimal interaction.

But if you miss something while the Auto-Scroll is turned on, you can use your finger to manually scroll to another section, or the use the slider – the Auto-Scroll keeps going until you tap the "Stop" button down in the bottom left corner.

Searching Your Transcripts

A very powerful tool in TranscriptPad is the ability to search your transcripts, although you need to make sure you know where you in the app when you perform a search.

If you're all the way down in a single transcript, then anything you type into the search box only searches that single transcript.

If you back out to the Case folder where you can see multiple transcripts, a search will search ALL of the transcripts, and it will show you how many hits are inside each transcript.

It's important to note that you are ONLY searching .TXT transcripts – this will NOT search your PDF exhibits. Just be aware of this so you have the proper expectation.

TranscriptPad does a beautiful job of showing you exactly where each search "hit" is located – with the list of page and line numbers on the left side.

Just tap one of the hits to jump directly to that location. Plus the word or phrase you searched for is highlighted. And on the left panel, the selected "hit" will become bold which is another nice visual cue to see where you're located.

Now here's a really nifty feature in TranscriptPad – if this is a search that you see yourself running repeatedly, then tap "Save Search" down in the bottom left corner.

This creates an “Issue Code” in TranscriptPad so that you can access it any time.

We’ll dig deeper into Issue Codes work in Part 2 of the TranscriptPad review.

Price and Podcast

TranscriptPad is a professional-grade app for lawyers, which justifies the professional-grade price for an iPad app at $89.99.

If you balk at that price, then you haven’t done your research on other transcript software that you’d have to buy to get the same features and functionality. You’re getting an amazing deal with TranscriptPad.

If you want to know more about how lawyers use TranscriptPad, then be sure to listen to my podcast interview with Stephen Embry where he talks specifically how he uses the app in his litigation practice.

Download TranscriptPad ($89.99)

DISCLOSURE: Several years ago, Lit Software provided a free download code for TranscriptPad that I have used in many CLE presentations and I used the app for this review.