

Guide to Transcripts and Captions

Special thanks to Dave Giberson of the San Diego Community College District Online Learning Pathways group for permission to borrow from his excellent guidelines and tutorials.

I. Overview

Media posted on the Web should be made accessible to individuals with disabilities, including visually and hearing impaired people. This means providing transcripts and/or captions for audio and video. You can understand the need for transcripts and captions if you keep in mind how people may access content.

- Blind individuals often use screen readers, which is software that uses audio output to interpret and “read” the content, such as transcripts, out loud to the user.
- Hearing impaired individuals may depend on captions and transcripts so they can access audio by reading.

II. Standards for Captioning

Providing captions for media is a broadly accepted accessibility standard, as reflected in [WCAG 2.0](#) as well as [Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act](#).

III. Prioritization

Providing transcripts and/or captions may be time-consuming and poses costs. Your first step is to be judicious about what you post. Consider whether the multimedia project serves your department’s mission and is of high enough quality to be worth the effort and cost.

In addition, the prospect of captioning can overwhelm anyone with a large media repository. You will need to prioritize.

Considerations for prioritization:

1. **Focus on transcribing and captioning *new* media projects** and, for the time, being don’t worry about retroactive captioning.
2. **Review your posted media and take down any that is of low quality or no longer useful.**
3. **For new media projects (and ultimately for existing postings) prioritize:**
 - Informational media available to and intended for the general public
 - Media used in recurring student courses
 - Media posted for employees that is related to job duties, policy, or conducting University business
 - Media intended for systemwide or campuswide audiences
4. **Recognize situations when transcripts or captions may not be necessary:**
 - Media used for one-time courses in which no students need accommodation
 - Media used for internal audiences that require no accommodation

- Videos of large, live events, such as commencement ceremonies

IV. Whether to Transcribe or Caption

Some situations require only transcripts. Others require captions. Note that to make captions you must first have a transcript.

1. Provide transcripts for *audio-only recordings*.

- The text transcript must be posted along with the audio recording for hearing impaired individuals. (Posting a transcript also ensures your website is keyword searchable and will be indexed by search engines, which improves functionality for all.)

2. Provide captions for *video*.

Captioned video

- ensures that deaf or hearing impaired individuals can use the video,
- supports different learning styles, especially for people who prefer to read instead of listen, and
- is useful when it's not possible or convenient to play the sound.

There are two types of captions:

- Closed captions: This is the technique to use because the viewer can turn off the captioning.
- Open captions: Captions appear without the option to remove them.

V. How to Get Transcripts and Closed Captions

You may hire an outside service to transcribe and caption your video, or you may do it yourself.

	Outside Service	In-House
Advantages	Reduces staff effort; may save time	No one-time costs
Disadvantages	Cost usually is based on the time length of the media file The transcript must be proofread	Time consuming, requires some training

1. Outside Services

There are many [transcription/captioning services](#) available. You can request them to do the whole process for you – take your video, make a transcript from it, and then add closed captions to it and return it to you as a finished file ready to post. Or you may provide them with the

transcript and have them use it to add captions to the video, and then return the file to you to post.

2. In-House Transcripts and Captions

The most time-consuming step is creating the transcript. Readily available and affordable software makes the synchronization of a transcript with its video almost easy.

Steps for Creating Transcripts

1. **Create an audio file.** If starting with a video, extract the soundtrack into a stand-alone sound (MP3) file that can be used for transcription. One way to accomplish this is to import the video into Camtasia and export the soundtrack as an MP3 digital audio file (tutorial for extracting the audio from a video file to MP3 format).
2. **Transcribe the audio.** You can do this manually or using voice recognition software. A good rule of thumb is to manually transcribe when the automatic transcription is less than 70% accurate. Once you have a transcript, you will need to proofread and correct it.
 - **Manually.** Once the audio file is created it can be used in a manual transcription process - a text transcript is created by typing while listening intermittently to the audio file. This process can be greatly facilitated by use of a transcription-optimized, free audio player such as [Express Scribe](#). [Tutorial for using Express Scribe](#).
 - **Using voice recognition software.** It is possible to use a voice-recognition package such as the Microsoft Windows voice-recognition engine now integrated into Camtasia 7.1+ or the commercially available Dragon Naturally Speaking to convert the audio file into a rough text transcript. This transcript must then be edited to produce a usable document. The efficiency of this approach vs. the manual method described above is variable, but the tight integration between Camtasia Studio 7.1+ and the Windows voice-recognition technology makes this a good choice for videos involving a single speaker for whom a voice recognition profile has been created. This method is generally ineffective for multi-speaker videos or those for which a speaker voice profile cannot be created.
3. **Tutorials:**
 - [Using Windows VR and Camtasia Studio](#)
 - [Using Dragon Naturally Speaking](#)

VI. How to Caption Video

Once you have the transcript, the next step is to use the transcript to make the captions. A variety of [tools are available for captioning](#):

VII. How to Include Captioned Video in Your Web Site

- If your media includes controls, ensure they work with a keyboard.
- Also, don't use color as the only way to indicate meaning.

- The classic example is a using green button for “go” and a red button for “stop.” However, a screen reader can’t interpret the colors and a colorblind user may not be able to distinguish the colors. To remedy this situation, provide a text indicator that can be read by the screen reader and the colorblind user.

VIII. Additional Information

- Web Captioning Overview: <http://webaim.org/techniques/captions/>
- Best Practices in Online Captioning: <http://joelclark.org/access/captioning/bpoc/>
- Captioning Web Video (SDCCD): <http://online2.sdccd.edu/tutorials/captioning/>