



Original Content QA Lab: Subtitling Guidelines

FR-CA

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Reading Speed

17 characters per second for most programming.

13 characters per second for programming intended for children 6 and under.

Duration

Minimum duration for subtitles is 20 frames.*

Maximum duration for subtitles is 7 seconds.

*Reading speed should always be considered. Avoid reading-speed violations whenever possible.

Intervals

A minimum of 2-frame intervals should be used between continuous subtitles.

Character Limitations

42 characters per line.

Timing + Duration

Text should be timed closely to the beginning and end of audio when possible. However, it's acceptable for subtitles to stay on-screen for up to a second after audio ends to meet reading-speed requirements.

Avoid subtitles that:

- Are not in sync with the audio
- Start well in advance of the corresponding audio (approximately 7 frames or more)
- Stay on-screen for too long (more than a second after dialogue ends or more than 7 seconds total)
- Flash on-screen too briefly to read

Line Treatment

Subtitles should occupy 2 lines maximum.

Positioning

Standard positioning is center-justified, at the bottom of screen.

If subtitles obscure pertinent text that appears in the lower third of the screen, or if overlapping with lower-third text will cause subtitles to become illegible, then they should be moved to the top of the screen.

Titling Dialogue

Dialogue should be subtitled as faithfully as possible within the limits of reading speed.

- When reading speed is exceeded, dialogue should be truncated without sacrificing or altering its intended meaning.
- Non-essential dialogue should generally be truncated first (verbal hedgers such as "Well," or "You know," for example).
- Conversely, subtitles should not add or rewrite dialogue for clarity.
- Do not title stand-alone utterances/exclamations such as oh, whoa, or wow. These can be titled when part of a larger sentence.

Dual Speakers

Use a hyphen to indicate two speakers in the same subtitle. Insert a space after hyphen.

CORRECT:

- Je crois qu'on devrait voter.
- Encore? On a déjà voté.

Continuity

Do not use ellipses when an ongoing sentence is split between two or more continuous subtitles. Commas should be used as usual when appropriate.

CORRECT:

SUB 1: J'ai dit que tu pouvais venir,
SUB 2: mais je ne pense pas
que maman et papa approuvent.

INCORRECT:

SUB 1: J'ai dit que tu pouvais venir...
SUB 2: ...mais je ne pense pas
que maman et papa approuvent.

EXCEPTION: When ongoing dialogue is interrupted by an onscreen text subtitle, we should use ellipses like in the example below:

Subtitle 1 Son coeur a cessé de battre...
Subtitle 2 DOCTEUR
Subtitle 3 ...pendant une minute.

Use an ellipsis to indicate:

- Dialogue that trails off
- Dialogue that begins mid-sentence
- A significant pause (one second or more)
- If dialogue continues in the next subtitle after a significant pause, ellipses should be used at both the end of the first subtitle and at the beginning of the second subtitle.

EXAMPLE:

SUB 1: Attends, as-tu mangé...
SUB 2: ...toute l'épicerie?

an abrupt interruption.

EXAMPLE:

SUB 1:- Je pense que tu as oublié de fermer...
SUB 2:- Je l'ai fermé!

On-screen Text

Should include all plot-pertinent on-screen text.

This includes narrative text (text that is part of principal photography) and burn-in text (text that has been added in post-production). If the English text is understood in FR-CA, no need to add a subtitle. For example, "parking" would be understood so it would be redundant to add that sub.

Subtitles should generally match the case of the on-screen text.

Onscreen text and dialogue should never be on the same subtitle.

Glossaries

Keep a glossary of recurring terms and names to ensure consistency across episodes and seasons.

Glossaries should also include templates for recurring opening- and end-credits sequences when necessary.

Spelling & Research

Abbreviations:

For the complete list of abbreviations rules, please consult:

http://bdl.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/bdl/gabarit_bdl.asp?T1=abr%C3%A9viation&T3.x=0&T3.y=0

Accents:

Put accents on all capitalized letters.

Acronyms:

Acronyms should be written without periods between letters: FBI, DPJ (Direction de la protection de la jeunesse), UE (Union européenne), etc.

Character Names:

-Do not translate names (Mary, John), unless an official translation has been provided.

-Translate nicknames if they have a specific meaning.

-Use localization for well-known mythical characters (père Noël).

-Do a research for official translation of characters names because this is a case by case situation (For instance, we say Mickey Mouse or Spider-Man, but Jack l'Éventreur (Jack Ripper) or bonhomme Sept-Heures (boogy man). Can consult this page for more info:

http://bdl.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/bdl/gabarit_bdl.asp?T1=personnage&T3.x=12&T3.y=19&id=3844

Grammar and rules:

Refer to la Banque de dépannage linguistique for linguistic and grammar questions. <https://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/ressources/bdl.html>

Spelling:

Refer to the Larousse as the primary source for spelling. <http://www.larousse.fr/>

Titles and names:

When confirming the names of songs, albums, cast & crew, movies/TV shows, or apps, please remain consistent with how they appear in Apple Music and iTunes. Localized movie titles or shows can be found on <https://mcc.gouv.qc.ca/index.php?id=28>. Click on "recherche avancée" to look for a title.

Translation:

Refer to Termium <http://www.btb.termiumplus.gc.ca/> and Le grand dictionnaire terminologique <http://www.granddictionnaire.com/> for official localization.

Slang:

For spelling of swear words: http://pages.videotron.com/micpreno/les_sacres_au_quebec.htm

Expletives

Match the audio. Do not censor at will. If the expletive is audible, title the word.

If the expletive is bleeped, muted, or censored in any way, title the first letter of the word and represent the rest of the word with asterisks.

EXAMPLE:

C'est c***** bon.

Foreign Dialogue

Foreign dialogue should only be translated if it is plot-pertinent and meant to be understood by the viewer.

Non-essential foreign dialogue should not be titled if it stands alone. If non-essential foreign dialogue is part of a larger English sentence, then it can be titled.

EXAMPLE:

Je lui ai donné du *feedback*.

Italics

Italics should be used for

- Voice-over dialogue (examples: narration or a character's internal thoughts)
- Dialogue from an entirely different location (such as pre-lap dialogue from the next scene)
- Dialogue transmitted over phone, radio, TV, or other electronic device

- Song lyrics
- Foreign language
- Titles of books, albums and movies. (Song titles should appear in French quotation marks «».)

Numerals

Numbers one to ten should be spelled out. Numbers 11 and up should be represented numerically.

Numbers between 1000 and 9999 do not require a space. Years don't need a space. Ex.: Il y avait 1000 soldats en 1945. (There were 1000 soldiers in 1945).

Numbers 10 000 and up should be written with a space.

Numbers that begin a sentence should generally be spelled out.

Exceptions:

- Addresses should always be written numerically with a comma after the number: 5, Primrose Lane

Indicate time on a 24-hour format, using the following spacing:

Il est 11 h (space). (It is 11 am)

Il est 11h30 (no space). (It is 11:30 am)

Convert to the metric system: kilometers (km), meters (m), centimeters (cm), kilograms (kg).

Currency

If a unit of currency is spoken in dialogue it should be spelled out or represented with the appropriate symbol.

EXAMPLE 1:

Je vais vendre l'app à 99 cents ou 1,29 \$.

If a unit of currency is not spoken in dialogue, the number should be written without it.

EXAMPLE 2:

Cela vous coûtera 129 ou 199
selon le modèle.

Punctuation

Follow standard official rules.

Some notes:

- Quotation marks should be used for dialogue and written text that is quoted, recited from memory, or read. Please use French quotation marks « ».

- Question marks and exclamation points should be placed outside of the quotation marks unless they are part of the quoted material. Periods and commas are always placed inside of the quotation marks.

Subtitle 1: Elle a dit : « Viens-tu ce soir »?

Subtitle 2: J'ai répondu : « Non. »

- If quoted text continues over several subtitles, quotation marks should only be used at the very beginning and very end of the quote. (Not at the beginning of each subtitle within the quote.)

- Use single quotes aka English quote for a quote within a quote.

Subtitle 1: Il a clos la séance par ces mots :

Subtitle 2: « Je vous dis "bonnes vacances!"

Subtitle 3: et j'espère vous revoir

Subtitle 4: reposés à la rentrée. »

- Colons can be used when appropriate. Semicolons should not be used.

- Space should be used before a colon and percentage sign, and before and after French quotation marks.

EXAMPLE: Une augmentation de 3 % et de 2,25 %.

-Spaces should not be used in front of question marks and exclamation points.

Refer to the punctuation section of Banque de dépannage linguistique:
http://bdl.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/bdl/gabarit_bdl.asp?T1=ponctuation&T3.x=0&T3.y=0

Songs

Song lyrics should generally not be titled unless they are actuated on-screen and plot-pertinent. Plot-pertinent doesn't simply mean thematically relevant—it means that the lyrics convey information that is necessary for a viewer's understanding of the plot.

No end punctuation should be used when titling lyrics, except for question marks or exclamation points when appropriate.

Commas should be used as usual within lyrics, but not at the end of a line.

The first letter in each line should be capitalized.

CORRECT:

*Tu pensais que j'étais tombé
Mais non*

INCORRECT:

*Tu pensais que j'étais tombé,
mais non*

There is a bit more leniency with casual/slang spelling in song lyrics than in spoken dialogue. For example, dropping the negative particle "ne" is acceptable when the audio calls for it.

Songs in which the lyrics have been altered or parodied for comedic effect can generally be titled.

Translation Credits

There should not be a subtitle for a translation/translator credit.