



Original Content QA Lab: Subtitling Guidelines

NL-NL

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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

Sentence structure

When possible, follow the English order of words in the translation.

EXAMPLE:

We walk with Freddy to school.

PREFERRED:

We lopen met Freddy naar school.

NOT PREFERRED:

We lopen naar school met Freddy.

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. No space should appear between hyphens and dialogue. When the person started speaking in the previous subtitles, you can leave out his/her hyphen to show that he/she is continuing.

EXAMPLE:

-Ik denk dat we moeten stemmen.
-Alweer? Dat hebben we al gedaan.

EXAMPLE:

Ik weet dat het niet slim is,
maar vorige week
was dat de beste optie.
-Meen je dat?

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: Van mij mag je met ons meegaan,
SUB 2: maar ik denk niet dat het
van papa en mama mag.

INCORRECT:

SUB 1: Van mij mag je met ons meegaan...
SUB 2: ...maar ik denk niet dat het
van papa en mama mag.

Use 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 the end of the first subtitle, but not at the beginning of the second subtitle.

EXAMPLE:

SUB 1: Wacht, heb je echt...
SUB 2: alles opgegeten?

Use ellipses (...) to indicate an abrupt interruption.

EXAMPLE:

-Volgens mij ben je vergeten...
-Ik heb het op slot gedaan.

On-screen Text

The subtitle stream should include all plot-pertinent, non-redundant 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).

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

Onscreen text and dialogue should be on different subtitles.

You can use ellipsis in cases where the burnt-in/forced narrative interrupts the dialogue.

Note: When translating burn-ins/narrative text, please follow the case of the burn-in/narrative text.

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

Spelling:

You may refer to the "Van Dale" online dictionary or "Onze Taal" as some of the primary sources for spelling and rules.

<http://www.vandale.nl/opzoeken>

<https://onzetaal.nl>

Other options include:

<http://www.mijnwoordenboek.nl>

<http://www.woorden.org>

For sayings and expressions, the following site can be helpful (*note: it is not always reliable or accurate):

<http://context.reverso.net/vertaling/engels-nederlands/>

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.

Note:

- Don't translate brand/change brand names if known and relevant to the plot (such as Apple, Nike, Rolex).
- Translate into a more generic term if the brand is unknown in your geo and the viewer will miss the meaning because of it (for example, if Clorox isn't known in the Netherlands, translate as bleach).
- Proper names (such as Peter, Smith...) — do not translate.
- Nicknames (such as Cranky Maria) — translate if relevant/plot-pertinent
- Other historical or popular characters (such as Santa Claus, Tooth Fairy) — translate

Slang:

Slang spellings should be confirmed with reputable sources whenever possible.

Abbreviations

- Abbreviations in Dutch aren't written in capital letters (hbo, gsm), unless they refer to names or come from the English language (ANWB, VVD / DNA, ADSL, ICT, ISBN).
- Don't use periods when you pronounce the word as the letters written (tv = tee-vee / btw = bee-tee-wee).
- Use periods when you'd pronounce the word as if it was fully written (enz. = enzovoort / m.u.v. = met uitzondering van).

For more information and exceptions, please refer to:

Acronyms

Follow the English abbreviations (for example when translating business terms), even when the Dutch words would become a different abbreviation. The exception to this is when the English abbreviation already has a different meaning in Dutch, in that case, follow the Dutch abbreviation.

EXAMPLE:

TAM: Totally Addressable Market

CORRECT:

TAM: Totaal Bereikbare Markt

INCORRECT:

TBM: Totaal Bereikbare Markt

Expletives (swearing)

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:

Dat it f***** briljant.

Exclamations

Exclamations ("Ok, Ah, Uh, Ey...") are not translated unless:

1. It is in combination with other words (it can say something about the tone of speak f.e. sarcastic)

EXAMPLE:

Oh, nee? Jij wel dan?

2. When they mean something

EXAMPLE:

-So that is how it works. -Oh. (here it means: I get it)

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 sentence, then it can be titled.

EXAMPLE:

Ik zeg al een tijdje *arrivederci* tegen zoetheid.

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 (if the rights of the song have been granted)
- Foreign language (unless the words are part of regular usage)
- Titles of books, video games, albums, and movies. (Song titles should appear in quotation marks.)
- Genus and species names (examples: *E. coli*, *Triceratops*)

Numerals

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

Numbers between 1.000 / 1000 and 9.999 / 9999 can be written with a period but it is not required. Numbers 10.000 and up should be written with a period.

Exceptions:

- Addresses should always be written numerically: Jan Pieter Heijestraat 5
- Numbers that begin a sentence should always be spelled out.

When in doubt, please refer to: <https://onzetaal.nl/taaladvies/getallen-in-letters-of-cijfers>

Currency/Units of measure

If you encounter units of measure these should be converted to the metric system: Kilogram, kilometers, meters, centimeters, celsius instead of pound/foot/Fahrenheit etc.

EXAMPLE: EN: It weighed 500 pounds.
NL: Het weegt 227 kg.

Note: When you encounter a unit of currency, leave it in the same currency that is used in the original language. If a unit of currency is spoken in dialogue it should be spelled out. Use of the appropriate symbol is permitted if it helps deal with character limit constraints.

EXAMPLE 1:

Ik zou de app voor 99 cent of 1,29 dollar verkopen.

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

EXAMPLE 2:

Deze kost 129 of 199,
afhankelijk van het model.

When the currency symbol is used, it is placed in front of the value with a space (unless it is part of a compound).

EXAMPLE: \$ 129
€ 129

EXCEPTION: Hij betaalde met een \$50-biljet.

Dates and Time

The preferred way of notating a date is as follows:

- 15 juli 2016
- dinsdag 1 november 2011

When in doubt, please refer to: <http://taaladvies.net/taal/advies/vraag/1489/datumnotatie/>

When notating time, use military time:

EXAMPLES:

1. 2 PM
2. Between 5 and 9 PM
3. From 7 to 9 AM

CORRECT:

1. 14.00 uur (or "14.00 u." if necessary, but it's not preferred)
2. Tussen 17.00 en 21.00 uur
3. Van 7.00 tot 9.00 uur

For more examples and situations, please refer to: <https://onzetaal.nl/taaladvies/tijden-noteren>

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. Use double quotation marks "____".
- Single quotation marks '____' are used for words that are unknown to the reader, words that are made up, words that are meant ironically or a quote within a quote. For other situations and more examples, please refer to:
<https://onzetaal.nl/taaladvies/enkele-aanhalingstekens>
- Periods, question marks, and exclamation points should be placed inside of the quotation marks when they are part of the quoted material.

For other situations, please refer to:

<https://onzetaal.nl/taaladvies/aanhalingstekens-en-leestekens>

- Do not use quotation marks when someone is mentioning a thought.

EXAMPLES:

- Ik dacht: morgen ga ik naar de film.
- Morgen ga ik naar de film, dacht ik.
- 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.)
- Colons can be used when appropriate. Semicolons should not be used.

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:

*You thought I took a spill
But I didn't*

INCORRECT:

*You thought I took a spill,
but I didn't*

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.

References

- <https://onzetaal.nl/>
- <https://forum.opensubtitles.org/viewtopic.php?t=12639>
- <http://taaladvies.net/>