Original Content QA Lab: Subtitling Guidelines AR-SA

Last Revision
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Reading Speed

20 characters per second for most programming.
17 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, and text direction set to right to left.

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.

Dual Speakers

Use a hyphen to indicate two speakers in the same subtitle. A space should appear between hyphens and dialogue.

EXAMPLE:

<div dir="rtl">

- من قام بإعداد هذا الشاي؟

- أَنا وزوجتي.

</div>

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: أود أن اذهب معك إلى المبارة،

SUB 2: لكني لا أظن أن أبي وأمي سيوافقان.

INCORRECT:

SUB 1: أود أن اذهب معك إلى المبارة...

SUB 2: ...لكني لا أظن أن أبي وأمي سيوافقان.

Use three ellipsis without a space (...) to indicate:
- Dialogue that trails off.
- Dialogue that begins mid-sentence.
- A significant pause (one second or more).
- To denote an interruption.

EXAMPLE:

- أظن أنك نسيت أن تغلق ال...

- لقد أغلقته!

On-screen Text

All plot-pertinent on-screen text should be subtitled.

This includes narrative text (text that is part of principal photography) and burn-in text (text that has been added in post-production).

Do not subtitle any on-screen text that is redundant or understood without a subtitle.

When ongoing dialogue is interrupted by a speaker's title, information banner, or burn in text, do not use ellipses at the end of the sentence in the subtitle that precedes it and at the beginning of the sentence in the subtitle that follows it.

Note: onscreen text and dialogue should be on different subtitles.

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 & Grammar References:

- http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english-arabic/

- http://www.almaany.com/ar/dict/ar-ar/

- http://www.almaany.com/ar/dict/ar-en/

- http://acon.baykal.be/index.php

- http://www.schoolarabia.net/arabic/index_1_secondary.htm

Titles, Names & Locations

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.

Please Note:

• Do not transliterate the show name, film name, or episode title into Arabic. However, If the title appears on screen do not title it.
• The episode title should not be translated, but the episode number should be translated.

CORRECT:
<div dir="rtl">"الحلقة السابعه: Rock the Show".</div>

INCORRECT:
<div dir="rtl">"الحلقة السابعه: روك ذا شو".</div>

Character names should be transliterated and used in parenthesis.

EXAMPLE:
SUB1: Don't leave me, Jack!

<div dir="rtl">لا تتركني يا (جاك).</div>

Locations, city names, and country names should be transliterated and used in parenthesis

EXAMPLE:
<div dir="rtl">إستغرقت الرحلة من (لوس أنجلوس) إلى (باريس) 12 ساعه.</div>

Brands, Companies, Websites, Application Names & Apple Products

Brands, and company names like "Instagram, Mercedes, Barclays" should not be transliterated into Arabic. The English form is acceptable.

INCORRECT:

<div dir="rtl">هل اشتريت هذا القميص من "وال مارت"؟</div>

CORRECT:

<div dir="rtl">هل اشتريت هذا القميص من Walmart؟</div>

All Apple brands, and products should not be transliterated into Arabic.

If the product name is displayed on screen in English, there is no need to title it.

INCORRECT:

<div dir="rtl">أبل ميوزيك.</div>

CORRECT:

.Apple Music

Slang:
Slang is unacceptable unless in rare cases where there is no close Arabic equivalent. Modern Standard Arabic should always be used.

Abbreviations:
Abbreviations can be transliterated into Arabic between parenthesis, and with a hyphen between them. An explanation of the abbreviation should be displayed only for the first time it appears on screen.

EXAMPLE:

SUB1: Martin Garicks: Producer, DJ.

INCORRECT:

<div dir="rtl">(مارتن غاريكس)، منتج، منسق أغاني.</div>

CORRECT:

<div dir="rtl">(مارتن غاريكس)، منتج، منسق أغاني (دي-جاي).</div>

Numerals

For consistency, the Arabic numerals (1,2,3) should be used.

INCORRECT:

<div dir="rtl">

٢٠ مليون دولار.

</div>

CORRECT:

<div dir="rtl">

20 مليون دولار.

</div>

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

If numbers are shown in range, and one of them is below ten, use the numerical version for both.

EXAMPLE:

<div dir="rtl">

حققت الشركة أرباح بنسبة تتراوح مابين 9 و 14 بالمئة.

</div>

Numbers between 1000 and 9999 do not require a comma. Numbers 10,000 and up should be written with a comma.

Fractions and decimals numbers should be used numerically.

Exceptions:
• Addresses should always be written numerically: 5 Primrose Lane
• Numbers that begin a sentence should generally be spelled out.

Measurements

All measurements that are in the Imperial system should be converted, approximated, and displayed in the Metric system.

EXAMPLE 1:

The distance between my house and my work is 12 miles.

<div dir="rtl">

المسافة بين منزلي وعملي هي 20 كم.

</div>

Currency

If a unit of currency is spoken in dialogue it should be transliterated (إسترليني، دولار، يورو، إلخ، إلخ) or represented with the appropriate symbol.

EXAMPLE 1:

I'd sell the app for 99 cents or $1.29

INCORRECT:

سأبيع التطبيق بـ 99 قرش أو 1.29 ريال.

CORRECT:

سأبيع التطبيق بـ 99 سنت أو 1.29 دولار.

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

EXAMPLE 2:

That will cost you 129 or 199
depending on the model.

سيكلفك 129 أو 199 حسب الطراز.

Italics & Capitalization

Italics and capitalization do not apply to the Arabic language and should not be used.

Expletives

Expletives can translated to their equivalent in classic Arabic. Slang expletives should not be used.

(هراء، تباً لك، سحقاً، اللعنة، إلخ، إلخ)

Foreign Dialogue

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

EXAMPLE:

I'm saying *arrivederci* to sweets for a while.

سأقول الوداع للحلوى لبعض الوقت.

Punctuation

Follow standard official rules.

Quotation Marks

- Quotation marks should be used for dialogue and written text that is quoted, recited from memory, or read. If the quote was a press excerpt, make sure you include the name of the magazine or newspaper.

EXAMPLE:

The New York Times: "ألبوم الإسبوع: مايكل جاكسون، (باد)".

- Quotation marks should be used to introduce technical or business terms, and burn-in banners that provide pertinent information to the viewer. Like introducing a character or defining a tech term. The term defined should be in quotes to distinguish from regular dialogue.
- Do not use quotation marks for character names.

EXAMPLE:

SUB1: We became a peer-to-peer market.

BURN-IN: Peer-to-Peer: When individuals buy and sell directly to each other.

أصبحنا سوق "نظير للنظير".

"النظير للنظير: بيع الأفراد وشرائهم من بعضهم البعض مباشرةً".

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.

- 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 for a quote within a quote.
- Colons can be used when appropriate. Semicolons should not be used.

Parenthesis

- Parenthesis should be used for character names, abbreviations, and when appropriate. Do not use quotation marks for character names.
- Transliterated terms that are commonly known to Arabic speakers (like ويب، روك، واي-فاي) should be put between parenthesis.

EXAMPLE:

SUB1: He likes jazz, rap and pop music.

إنه يحب موسيقي الـ(جاز) والـ(راب) والـ(بوب).

EXAMPLE:

SUB1: Don't leave me, Jack!

لا تتركني يا (جاك).

Percentages(%) should be spelled out in Arabic, and numbers should follow the basic numerals rules. (See Numerals for more information.)

EXAMPLE:

The rate of unemployment increased by 9%.

INCORRECT:

إرتفع معدل البطالة بنسبة 9%.

CORRECT:

إرتفع معدل البطالة بنسبة تسعة بالمئة.

Arabic Accents & Diacritics

Only use the following Arabic diacritics: الهمزة and تنوين الفتحة.

الضمة should be used when the verb is in the passive voice فعل مبني للمجهول.

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.

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.