Original Content QA Lab: Subtitling Guidelines
FR-FR

Last Revision
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Table of Contents

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 must always be considered. Avoid reading-speed violations whenever possible.

Intervals

A minimum of 2-frame intervals is necessary between continuous subtitles.

Character Limitations

42 characters per line.

Timing + Duration

Text must 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 must 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 must be moved to the top of the screen.

Titling Dialogue

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

• When reading speed is exceeded, dialogue must be truncated without sacrificing or altering its intended meaning.
• Non-essential dialogue must 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. A space must appear between hyphens and dialogue.

Correct:

- Je pense que nous devrions voter.
- Encore ? Nous l'avons déjà fait.

Continuity

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

CORRECT:

SUB 1: Je pense que tu peux te joindre à nous,

SUB 2: mais je ne pense pas que papa et maman soient d'accord.

INCORRECT:

SUB 1: Je pense que tu peux te joindre à nous…

SUB 2: …mais je ne pense pas que papa et maman soient d'accord.

Use an ellipsis to indicate:

• Dialogue that trails off
• Dialogue that begins mid-sentence
• A significant pause (one second or more)

SUB 1: Attends, est-ce que tu as…
SUB 2: …tout mangé ?

• An abrupt interruption

- Je pense que tu as oublié de fermer…
- Je l'ai fermé !

• when ongoing dialogue is interrupted by an onscreen text subtitle:

SUB 1: Avez-vous eu des nouvelles...
SUB 2: INSPECTEUR DERRICK
SUB 3: ...de mon fils ?

On-screen Text

Should include all plot-pertinent on-screen text (always include on-screen text if the English subtitles contain it).

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-FR, for example, "Manager" would be understood, so it is not necessary to add that subtitle.

Subtitles should generally match the case of the on-screen text.
Onscreen text and dialogue must never be on the same subtitle.

Glossaries

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

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

Spelling & Research

Spelling

Refer to:
- The Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales
http://www.cnrtl.fr/
- You can also check the Larousse dictionary
http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais

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. You can also find FR-FR movies or show titles on: http://www.allocine.fr/ or https://www.senscritique.com/.

Translation

Refer to:
http://www.wordreference.com/fr/ or http://www.linguee.fr/.

Grammar and rules

Refer to:
- Projet Voltaire: https://www.projet-voltaire.fr/regles-orthographe/
- La banque de dépannage linguistique https://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/ressources/bdl.html
- http://www.academie-francaise.fr/questions-de-langue

Important examples

- Always use accents on capital letters:
    - On the right
    - À droite

- Use these abbreviations:
  Monsieur = M. (use a period); Madame = Mme (no period); Docteur = Dr (no period); Professeur = Pr (no period)

- Regarding the acronyms:
  Use periods between letters when you have enough space, otherwise they can be dismissed: S.W.A.T. or FBI, NYC, GIGN.

- Regarding brand names:
  Use brand names when it's relevant to the plot, for example in the movie *The social Network* you can use "Facebook". Otherwise you can replace by a generic, for example replace "a Ferrari" by "a luxurious car" or "a Rolex" by "a luxurious watch".

- Concerning character names and nicknames:
  Never translate names, for example do not replace "John" by "Jean" or "Michael" by "Michel".
  About nicknames, they should be translated if there is a meaning, for example the nickname of "Popcaan" (the rapper) is "The Unruly Boss", we will not replace it by "Le patron indiscipliné", we will keep the english nickname.
  For the historical characters, we should translate their names, for example "Christopher Columbus" will be replaced by "Christophe Colomb".

Slang:

Slang spellings should be confirmed with reputable sources whenever possible.
You can check the Dictionnaire urbain:
http://dictionnaire-urbain.fr/ or http://www.urbandictionary.com/.

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:

> That's f****** brilliant.
> P***** c'est génial.

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:

> I'm saying *arrivederci* to sweets for a while.
> J'ai dit *bye bye* aux sucreries pour un bon moment.

Italics

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

Exceptions:

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

Time must be written in a 24 hours format, and with a specific format, for example: 9:30 or 9 h 30 or 9 h; 12:00 or 12h; 13:18 or 13 h 18; 17:45 or 17 h 45; 21:52 or 21 h 52.

Measurements must be converted too.
EXAMPLE 1 : 10 ft = 3 m
EXAMPLE 2 : 10 lbs = 4,5 kg
EXAMPLE 3 : 100 °F = 38 °C

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 or 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 or 199
Selon le modèle.

It is necessary to adapt the currency, it must be converted to euros if there is a large difference between them, but for the USD we should keep it as it is.
EXAMPLE 1:
If the currency is the USD/$, you must not convert it, 100 $ = 100 €
EXAMPLE 2:
If the currency is the Yen/¥, you must convert it, 13 000 Yen = 100 euros

Punctuation

Follow standard official rules.

Some notes:

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

EXAMPLE 1: - J'ai pensé lui dire : « tu es très belle ».

- Question marks and exclamation points must 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.

EXAMPLE 1: - Je me suis demandé : « Qu'est-ce que je fais là ? »
EXAMPLE 2: - Je lui ai dit : « Coucou toi ! »
EXAMPLE 3: - Comme le disait Jean de La Fontaine : « Rien ne sert de courir, il faut partir à point.»

- 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.)

EXAMPLE 1:
SUB 1: - Comme le disait Jean de La Fontaine : « Rien ne sert de courir,
SUB 1: il faut partir à point.»

- Colons and semicolons can be used when appropriate.
- Space should be used before a colon and percentage sign, and before and after French quotation marks.
- Spaces should be used in front of question marks and exclamation points.

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 (Adapt for your GEO)
Tu penses que je suis tombé
Mais non

INCORRECT
Tu penses que je suis tombé,
Mais non

There is a bit more leniency with casual/slang spelling in song lyrics than in spoken dialogue. For example, dropping the "e" from "petit" results to p'tit. In this kind of case it 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.