



Original Content QA Lab: Subtitling Guidelines

NO-NO

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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. No space should appear between hyphens and dialogue.

EXAMPLE:

-Jeg synes vi skal stemme.
-Igjen? Vi har jo allerede gjort det.

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: Du kan godt slå følge,

SUB 2: men jeg tror ikke
mor og far vil like det.

INCORRECT:

SUB 1: Du kan godt slå følge,...

SUB 2: ...men jeg tror ikke
mor og far vil like det.

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: Han sa at...
SUB 2: ...kjøleskapet var tomt.

Use ellipses to indicate an abrupt interruption.

EXAMPLE:

-Jeg tror du glemte å...
-Jeg lukket det!

On-screen Text

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 Norwegian, no need to add a subtitle.

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

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

Use ellipses in cases where the on-screen text interrupts the dialogue.

EXAMPLE:

SUB 1: Jeg startet i denne bransjen...

SUB 2: SKUESPILLER

SUB 3: ...da jeg var seks år.

Main and Episode Titles

The main title should not be subtitled, unless an Apple-approved translation exists.

Episode titles should not be subtitled if they do not appear on screen. If they appear on-screen, request/use an Apple-approved translation.

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.

It is very important to stay consistent for the entire duration of the film, episode or season. When working on a series with several episodes, refer to prior episodes in order to ensure consistency. A precedent may already exist.

Spelling & Research

Spelling:

Refer to sources such as Språkrådet, UiO and UiB. When in doubt, check to see how Aftenposten and Dagens Næringsliv spell the word in question.

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.

Slang:

Slang spellings should be confirmed with reputable sources whenever possible.

Resources

www.sprakradet.no

www.snl.no

<http://ordbok.uib.no/>

Acronyms

Acronyms shall not be translated.

Examples include: NATO, BRICS, OPEC, etc.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations are acceptable if they improve line treatment, reading speed, timing, or help with character constraints etc., and if they comply with the rest of the NO-NO guidelines. Abbreviations must follow the conventions outlined on Språkrådet's website.

EXAMPLE:

Han er admin. dir. og styreleder i en stor organisasjon.

The following abbreviated titles should be capitalized and not translated:
Mr., Ms., Mrs., Dr., etc.

Resource:

<http://www.sprakradet.no/sprakhjelp/Skriveregler/Forkortinger/>

Brand Names

Brand names should be left as is. Consider using the names of local brands or generic terms if it is unlikely that the audience is familiar with the product.

Example of when to retain brand name:

EN: She likes Ford and Chevy.

NO-NO: Hun liker Ford og Chevy.

Example of when to use generic term:

EN: He bought jam and Skippy.

NO-NO: Han kjøpte syltetøy og peanøttsmør.

Character Names

For character names that have well-established local Norwegian translations, use the Norwegian name (examples may include mythical and historical characters).

For character names that do not have well-established Norwegian translations, retain the English name or use a generic term/name that conveys the same meaning as the original.

Nicknames can be translated if they are plot-pertinent.

Proper names are never translated.

Example of when to use a GEO specific name:

EN: Mickey Mouse

NO-NO: Mikke Mus

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:

Det er f**n ikke sant!

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, it can be titled.

EXAMPLE:

Jeg sier *arrivederci* til søtsaker for nå.

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 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.

Use commas when dealing with decimals. Example: 3,14 not 3.14.

Use a space for numbers with more than 4 digits. Example: 100 000 not 100,000.

Exceptions:

- Addresses should always be written numerically, with the number following the street name: Primrose Lane 5
- Numbers that begin a sentence should generally be spelled out.

Units of Measurement

If a unit of currency is spoken in dialogue it should be spelled out.

Always convert units of measurement to the metric system: kilo (kg), kilometer (km), meter, centimeter (cm), celsius, 24-hour clock etc.

Round numbers to the nearest integer when appropriate. If the exact measurement is pertinent to the plot it should be included. Keep the number of decimals within reason.

Use kilo instead of kilogram.

Only abbreviate the unit when reading speed constraints require it.

EXAMPLE 1:

Jeg selger varer som koster mellom 1,2 og 1,29 dollar.

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

EXAMPLE 2:

Det koster mellom 100 og 150.

Convert units of measurement to the metric system.

EXAMPLE 3: EN: He lives 62 miles away.
NO: Han bor 100 km unna.

EXAMPLE 4: EN: He weighs 150 pounds.
NO: Han veier 68 kilo.

Punctuation

Follow standard spelling rules (see the Reference section for more information).

Some notes:

- Quotation marks should be used for dialogue and written text that is quoted, recited from memory, or read. Use double quotation marks "_____".
- Place the punctuation inside the quotation marks only if it is part of the quote.
- 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.
- Song titles should always be in quotation marks.
- Colons can be used when appropriate. Semicolons should not be used.
- Always add a comma before "men".

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:

*Du tok en pille
Men ikke jeg*

INCORRECT:

*Du falt i bakken,
men ikke jeg*

Album titles should be in italics, song titles in quotation marks. Movie and book titles should also be in italics.

There is a bit more leniency with casual/slang spelling in song lyrics than in spoken dialogue.

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

Brevity

Norwegian subtitles should generally be kept concise and to-the-point, without compromising the content and tone of the material at hand. Filler words (such as Yeah, Oh, Wow, etc.) and repetitions can often be omitted.

Translation Credits

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