



Original Content QA Lab: Subtitling Guidelines

FI-FI

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Reading Speed

17 characters per second / 200 words per minute for most programming.
13 characters per second / 160 words per minute 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. If the subtitle exceeds one line, both lines should be of comparable length. Line breaks should ideally match a logical break in the dialogue, i.e. after a punctuation mark, or before a preposition or conjunction.

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.
- Direct translations should be avoided, when it alters the meaning in the storyline or make the Finnish sound non-native and unnatural. It is more important to bring out the message in a natural native flow, than translate word for word.

EXAMPLE:

EN: They put their heart and soul into it

FI (too direct translation): He panostavat sydämensä ja sielunsa.

FI (better translation): He ovat mukana koko sydämellään.

Dual Speakers

Use a hyphen to indicate two speakers in the same subtitle. No space should appear between hyphens and dialogue.

EXAMPLE:

-Äänestetään asiasta.
-Taasko? Luulin, että teimme sen jo.

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: Voisit lähteä mukaan,

SUB 2: mutta en usko, että
äiti ja isä antavat luvan.

INCORRECT:

SUB 1: Voisit lähteä mukaan...

SUB 2: ...mutta en usko, että
äiti ja isä antavat luvan.

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: Odota, söitkö jo...
SUB 2: ...siis, aivan kaikki?

- Use ellipsis (...) to indicate an abrupt interruption.

EXAMPLE:

-Taisit unohtaa sulkea...
-Minä suljin sen!

On-screen Text

Provide subtitles only for 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).

For on-screen text that includes details about the speaker, only subtitle their title (translate as appropriate). Do not subtitle speaker details that are redundant, such as the speaker name, the name of their company, or the name of their character.

Burn-ins should be in ALL CAPS unless they reference book passages, notes, text messages, emails, news articles etc.

Keep dialogue and on-screen text separate at all times. You can use ellipsis in cases where the on-screen text interrupts the dialogue.

EXAMPLE:

SUB 1: Meidän ei oikeastaan pitäisi...
Burn-in: PÄÄSY KIELLETTY
SUB 2: ...jatkaa tästä eteenpäin.

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 "Suomisanakirja" online dictionary at <https://www.suomisanakirja.fi> or "Kielitoimiston Sanakirja" at <http://www.kotus.fi/> as some of the primary sources for spelling.

Abbreviations and Acronyms:

Abbreviations and acronyms are acceptable if using them improves line treatment, easy reading flow and timing, and complies with the rest of the Finnish guidelines. Make sure to stay consistent throughout. Acronyms should be written without periods between letters: BBC, CIA, USA, UK. Common abbreviations can be found from <http://www.kotus.fi>.

Casual/slang spelling:

Slang spellings should be confirmed with reputable sources whenever possible. For example <https://www.urbaanisanakirja.com>.

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.
- Whenever you encounter brand names they should be left as is. You can consider using the names of local brands or generic terms in the event it is highly unlikely that the target audience is familiar with the product. Make sure to stay consistent throughout.

Example of when to retain brand name:

EN: Her favourite cars are Ford and Chevy.

FI: Hänen lempiautojaan ovat Ford ja Chevy.

Example of when to use generic term:

EN: He bought jam and Skippy!

FI: Hän osti hilloa ja pähkinävoita.

- When you encounter character names that have well-established translations in Finnish, you should use the Finnish name (examples may include mythical and historical characters, e.g. joulupukki).

- When you encounter character names that do not have a well-established translation in Finnish you should retain the English name or use a generic term/name that conveys the same meaning as the original.
- Proper names (such as Tom, Smith...) are never translated unless approved translations are provided.
- Nicknames (such as Mighty Marty) should not be translated unless they convey a specific meaning.

Expletives

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

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:

H***** loistava ajatus.

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:

Toivotan *arrivederci* makeisille muutamaksi kuukaudeksi.

Italics

Italics should be used for

- Voice-over dialogue (examples: narration or a character's internal thoughts)
- Dialogue, where speaker is entirely in a different location (not just off screen or off camera)
- Dialogue transmitted over phone, radio, TV, or other electronic device
- Song lyrics (if the rights of the song have been granted)

- Foreign language (unless they are part of regular usage)
- Titles of books, albums and movies. (Song titles should appear in quotation marks.)
- Genus and species names (examples: E. coli, Triceratops)

Numerals

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

Numbers more than four digits should have a space to separate thousands.

EXAMPLE: 100 000 not 100,000

Use commas when dealing with decimals.

EXAMPLE: 3,14 not 3.14.

A full stop should be used with times. FI uses 24-hour clock.

EXAMPLE: kello 7.45 not 7:45 AM; 18.10 not 6:10 PM

Exceptions:

- Addresses should always be written numerically: Ruukintie 66
- Numbers that begin a sentence should generally be spelled out.

Currency/Units of measure

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

EXAMPLE: EN: It weighed 500 pounds.
FI: Se painoi 227 kg.

Unit of currency should not be converted.

If a unit of currency is spoken in dialogue it should be spelled out. Use of the appropriate symbol is permitted if it helps to deal with character limit constraints.

EXAMPLE:

Tämä appi maksaa 99 senttiä tai 1,29 dollaria.

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

EXAMPLE:

Tämän hinta on 129 tai 199
mallista riippuen.

Placement of the currency symbol is placed after the value, regardless of currency.

EXAMPLE:

129 \$
129 €
129 EUR

Punctuation

Follow standard official 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.
- 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.)
- Song titles should always be inside quotation marks.
- Use single quotes for a quote within a quote.
- Colons can be used when appropriate. Semicolons should not be used.

Songs

Song lyrics should generally not be translated unless they are actuated on-screen and plot-pertinent, and only if the rights have been granted. 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*

There is a bit more leniency with casual/slang spelling in song lyrics than in spoken dialogue. For example, dropping the "g" from "ing" words—as in *ridin'*—is acceptable when the audio calls for it.

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

The title of albums has to be in italics while the name of the song has to be in quotation marks.

Translation Credits

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

Consistency

It is very important to stay consistent for the entire duration of the film, episode or season. If you are working on a show with several episodes you will have to refer back to prior episodes in order to ensure consistency in the translation of terms, handling of burnt-ins etc. A precedent may already exist. It is therefore important that you refer to the PR material, AM super rooms, and prior translations before starting the translation process.

Resources

<http://scripta.kotus.fi/visk/etusivu.php>

<http://www.kotus.fi/>