



Original Content QA Lab: Subtitling Guidelines

MS-MY

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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 "Awak tahu," or "Jadi," for example).
- Conversely, subtitles should not add or rewrite dialogue for clarity.
- Do not title stand-alone utterances/exclamations such as "oh" or "wah". 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 should appear between hyphens and dialogue.

EXAMPLE:

- Saya rasa kita patut buat undian.
- Sekali lagi?

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: Saya rasa awak patut ikut sekali,

SUB 2: tetapi saya tak rasa mak dan
ayah awak akan mengizinkan.

INCORRECT:

SUB 1: Saya rasa awak patut ikut sekali...

SUB 2: ...tetapi saya tak rasa mak dan
ayah akan akan mengizinkan.

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 the end of the first subtitle only and the first word at the beginning of the second subtitle should not be capitalised
- A sudden interruption

EXAMPLE 1 (CORRECT):

SUB 1: Sekejap, awak dah...

SUB 2: makan semua?

EXAMPLE 1 (INCORRECT):

SUB 1: Sekejap, awak dah...

SUB 2: Makan semua?

EXAMPLE 2:

-Saya rasa awak terlupa...

-Saya dah tutup!

- Use ellipsis without a space to indicate a subtitle is starting mid-sentence. For example, a TV playing in the background.

EXAMPLE: *...telah mengetahui perkara yang sebenar.*

On-screen Text

Provide subtitles for 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).

Subtitles for on-screen text should always be in upper case.

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.

If the dialogue is interrupted by an on-screen text subtitle, use ellipses to indicate the interruption.

EXAMPLE:

SUB 1: Saya tak tahu langsung...

SUB 2: PENGARAH

SUB 3: ...yang awak ni pemuzik juga.

Note: onscreen text and dialogue should be on different subtitles.
(as shown above)

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:

- Don't confuse words that sound similar in Indonesian such as
 - Example 1
 - Malay (Correct): fikir
 - Indonesian (Incorrect): pikir
 - Example 2
 - Malay (Correct): cuba
 - Indonesian (Incorrect): coba
- Intentional misspellings should not be reproduced in the translation unless it's relevant to the plot.

'Awak' as 'You':

- Use 'awak' for 'you' in conversation when working on this task. This is to eliminate the extra work needed to differentiate the way Malaysian address people by marital status or by title a person obtained educationally or politically. Make sure it's consistent through out the episode.
- Use 'anda' only if there's voice instruction from device or when it's plot pertinent.

Abbreviations and acronyms:

- Abbreviations such as "yg", "awk", "ni" and "tu" are not acceptable.
- Title before name such as "En." for Encik, "Pn." for Puan, "Dr." for Doktor and "Prof." for Profesor are acceptable with period at the end of the abbreviations.
- Keep the English abbreviation for phrase that will be explained later in the video unless there's established Malay abbreviation for it.
 - Example English abbreviation (Correct)
 - UI: Antara Muka Pengguna - Layar yang terpapar apabila menggunakan sesuatu aplikasi
 - Example Malay abbreviation (Wrong)
 - AMP: Antara Muka Pengguna - Layar yang terpapar apabila menggunakan sesuatu aplikasi
- Write acronyms without space between the letters : USD, RM, BBC

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.
- Use Malay translations for historical/mythical characters (e.g., "Santa Klaus" for Santa Claus)
- Translate popular character names or nicknames if their localised form is generally used and well-known in Malay.
- Do not translate proper first and last names (e.g., Peter, Smith, etc)
- Translate brand names into a more generic term if the brand is unknown in Malay and the viewer would miss out on meaning in context.

Slang:

- Avoid using casual and slang spellings. If absolutely needed, confirm with reputable sources whenever possible.

Useful source:

Another reputable for linguistic matters can be found at:

<https://www.microsoft.com/Language/en-US/Search.aspx>

Refer to Pusat Rujukan Persuratan Melayu @ DBP:

<http://prpm.dbp.gov.my/>

Expletives

Expletives should be rendered as faithfully as possible.

EXAMPLE

1. Shit - Alamak
2. Fuck - Tak guna
3. I'm touching myself tonight - Saya nak berseronok malam ini. (I want to have fun tonight.)
4. Who the fuck are you? - Siapa awak? (Who are you?)

When it's not possible we can localise them in Malay given that the subtitle must have asterisks.

EXAMPLE

1. Bitch - S***** (Sundal)
2. Son of a Bitch - A*** h****

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:

Saya perlu mengatakan *arrivederci* kepada makanan manis untuk seketika.

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 (unless they are part of regular usage e.g., *persona non grata*, *doppelgänger*)
- Titles of books, albums and movies. (Song titles should appear in quotation marks.)
- Genus and species names (examples: *E. coli*, *Triceratops*)

Numerals & Metric System

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 comma. Numbers 10,000 and up should be written with a comma.

Exceptions:

- Addresses should always be written numerically: No. 5, Jalan Maju 1
- Numbers that begin a sentence should generally be spelled out.

Use metric system for measurements and convert when needed (e.g., km for kilometer, kg for kilograms)

Spell out symbols like % or & unless the space is limited (e.g., peratus, dan etc)

Always use space between number and symbol (e.g., 6 km, 5 kg)

Currency

If a unit of currency is spoken in dialogue it should be spelled out or represented with the appropriate symbol afterward.

EXAMPLE 1:

Saya akan menjual aplikasi itu pada harga 99 sen atau 1.29 USD.

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

EXAMPLE 2:

lanya bernilai 129 atau 199
bergantung pada model.

Note: Currency should not be converted.

Punctuation

Follow standard official rules.

Some notes:

- Double quotation marks (" ") should be used for dialogue and written text that is quoted, recited from memory, or read.
- Question marks, exclamation points, period and commas should be placed outside of the quotation marks unless they are part of the quoted material.
 - Ibu berkata, "Kawasan kampung lebih mendamaikan."
 - Dia memanggil budak itu sebagai "Si kurus".
- 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.

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:

*Salahkah diriku
Mengemis cinta darimu*

INCORRECT:

*Salahkah diriku
mengemis cinta darimu*

There is a bit more leniency with casual/slang spelling in song lyrics than in spoken dialogue. For example, "Teringek" for Teringat is acceptable when the audio calls for it.

Translation Credits

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