



# Original Content QA Lab: Subtitling Guidelines

## KO-KR

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## Reading Speed

12 characters per second for most programming.

9 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

16 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 the 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 and space to indicate two speakers in the same subtitle. Never exceed one speaking character per line.

### EXAMPLE:

- 다들 어떻게 생각하는지 물어보자.
- 또? 아까 물어본 것 같은데.

## 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: 너도 따라와도 괜찮아,

SUB 2: 가고 싶긴 한데  
부모님 허락을 받기가 어려울 것 같아.

### **INCORRECT:**

SUB 1: 너도 따라와도 괜찮아...

SUB 2: ...가고 싶긴 한데  
부모님 허락을 받기가 어려울 것 같아.

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: 아니, 진짜로...  
SUB 2: ...전부 다 먹은 거야?

Also use ellipses (...) to indicate an abrupt interruption.

### **EXAMPLE:**

- 아무리 급해도 문은 좀 닫고 다니...  
- 닫았어!

## 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).

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.

## 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:

Refer to <http://www.korean.go.kr> as the primary source for spelling.

### 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.
- Avoid translating proper names (e.g., Michael, Steven), unless translations have been pre-approved (all names should be transliterated according to the pre-established EN-KO notational systems).
- The only instances where nicknames should be translated is if and when they convey a particular meaning.
- Make use of language-specific translations for any historical and/or mythical characters (e.g., Santa Claus).
- Avoid placing a dot between first and last name (e.g., Jason Bourne = 제이슨 본) when transliterating names.

**Slang:**

Slang spellings should be confirmed with reputable sources whenever possible.

## 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:**

거참 \*\*나게 지껄이고 있네.

## 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 a single quote if it stands alone. If non-essential foreign dialogue is part of a larger English sentence, then it can be a single quote.

**EXAMPLE:**

살찌는 음식은 당분간 ‘아디오스’라고 했어.

- Foreign words and/or phrases should be translated when possible (e.g., hi, bye, thanks etc.). Transliterate the term(s) if no accurate translation is available.
- If transliteration is used for words and phrases, make sure to offset them by using a single quote.

**EXAMPLE:**

- ‘사요나라’

## Italics

Italics should never be used for any translation/transliteration.

## Numerals

- Numbers are to always be written numerically (i.e., 1, 2, 3 etc.) even when you are at the beginning of a sentence.
- Avoid using the 24-hour time format unless it is in a military context.
- Ensure to convert any measurable values (distance, size, weight etc.) to their metric system equivalents (kilometers, centimeters, kilograms etc.).

## Currency

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

### EXAMPLE 1:

앱 가격은 99 센트 아니면 \$1.29로 합시다.

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

### EXAMPLE 2:

모델에 따라 다르겠지만 129에서 199  
정도의 금액을 예상합니다.

- Currency should never be converted to the Korean won.

## Punctuation

Follow standard official rules.

Some notes:

- Quotation marks should be used for dialogue and written text that is quoted, recited from memory, or read.
- 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.
- There should never be a period at the end of a subtitle. A period can be used to indicate 2 separate sentences within a subtitle.

## Quotes

- Double quotation marks (“ ”) without spaces for all narrative text (principle photography, burn-in, main title).

### EXAMPLE:

“그레이 아나토미”  
“1992년 미국 시카고”

- Single quotation marks ( ‘ ’ ) for the following instances:  
To indicate quoted speech and citations  
To emphasize certain words or phrases  
Titles of films, TV programs, albums, songs, newspapers, books, works of art  
Foreign language
- Do not use quotation marks for voice-over text, such as when the speaker:
- Is part of a different reality, a different time and place (e.g., the speaker is part of the following scene but the visual picture is of the previous one)
- Recalls dialogue inside his/her head
- Is describing a scene in which he/she does not take part
- Quotes should be used at the start and end of each subtitle if the quote carries over more than one subtitle.

### EXAMPLE:

Subtitle 1: 우리 모두에게 분명히 말하더군요  
‘두 번째 창문 지나면 보이는’  
Subtitle 2: ‘첫 번째 출구로는 나가면 안 돼  
함정이니까’

## Repetitions

- Do not translate words or phrases repeated more than once.

If the repeated word or phrase is said twice in a row, time subtitle to the audio but translate only once.

## Songs

- Only subtitle plot-pertinent songs if the rights have been granted.
- Do not italicize lyrics.
- Punctuation: only question marks and exclamation marks should be used at the end of a line – no commas or periods. Commas can be used within the lyric line, if necessary.
- Use ellipses when a song continues in the background but is no longer subtitled to give precedence to dialogue.
- Do not use quotation marks to indicate song lyrics.
- 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.

### **CORRECT:**

새야 새야 파랑새야 녹두밭에 앉지 마라  
녹두꽃이 떨어지면 청포 장수 울고 간다

### **INCORRECT:**

새야 새야 파랑새야 녹두밭에 앉지 마라,  
녹두꽃이 떨어지면 청포 장수 울고 간다,

- 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 in a single quote.

## Titles

- Main titles do not get subtitled.

- Do not subtitle episode titles, regardless if episode titles appear on screen or not.
- For titles of published works/content, existing movies and TV shows - use the official or known translations. If none exist, translate or transliterate.

## Honorific

Formal - jondae (존댓말)

Informal - banmal (반말)

- Use formal speech for any non-established or unknown relationship or hierarchy, regardless of sex or whom is being spoken to.
- Use the deferential style (브니다) of speech for news broadcasts and/or for royalty, business settings, speeches and presentations. Use it for any and all circumstances that require the highest caliber of Korean formal speech.
- Formal speech should also be used for work settings, amongst co-workers, irrespective of gender.
- The setting and time period should be taken into consideration when determining which form of speech is to be used. E.g., In content taking place during the time of kings, we would use the deferential style for everyone in the king's court.
- Limitations on Informal Use:  
Do not use informal speech for children speaking to adults, unless it is the child's mother or father whom he/she is speaking to.  
Do not use informal speech for adults speaking to officials and/or authority figures (e.g., police, teachers, etc.)  
Do not use informal speech for when adults speak to senior citizens  
Do not use informal speech when men speak to strangers or unknown women (unless context is to be rude/impolite)

## Translation Credits

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