



# Original Content QA Lab: Subtitling Guidelines EN-MX (SDH)

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## Reading Speed

20 characters per second for most programming.

17 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.

SDH files should include stand-alone utterances/exclamations such as "oh", "whoa", and "wow".

## Dual Speakers

Use a hyphen to indicate two speakers in the same subtitle. No space should appear between hyphens and dialogue. If a speaker identifier is needed, it should follow the hyphen (see Speaker Identifiers section).

### **EXAMPLE:**

- Creo que deberíamos someterlo a votación.
- [John] ¿Otra vez? Ya lo hicimos.

## 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: Diría que puedes venir,  
SUB 2: pero no creo que  
mis padres lo permitirían.

### **INCORRECT:**

SUB 1: Diría que puedes venir...  
SUB 2: ...pero no creo que  
mis padres lo permitirían.

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: Espera, ¿te comiste...  
SUB 2: ...literalmente todo?

Use an ellipsis to indicate abrupt interruptions.

### **EXAMPLE:**

-Creo que olvidaste cerrar...  
-¡La cerré!

When ongoing dialogue is interrupted by an onscreen text subtitle, ellipses should be used at the end of the first subtitle and at the beginning of the third.

### **EXAMPLE:**

SUB 1: Creo que deberíamos comenzar...  
SUB 2: SALIDA  
SUB 3: ...a preparar la comida.

## Speaker identifiers

Speaker identifiers should be used when it is not clear from visuals or context who is speaking. Speaker IDs should appear on their own line when possible.

### **CORRECT:**

[Mary]  
¿Qué está pasando?

### **INCORRECT:**

[Mary] ¿Qué está pasando?

Avoid SDH subtitles with:

- Incorrect speaker IDs (the wrong person is identified)
- Redundant speaker IDs (the person is clearly speaking on-screen)
- Missing speaker IDs (it's not clear from visuals or context who's speaking without an ID)

Qualifiers should be used when a speaker alters their regular speaking voice in a way that is not obvious from context or visuals.

### **EXAMPLES:**

If it's not clear from visuals/context who's speaking:

[John susurra]  
¿Vienes?

If it is clear from visuals/context who's speaking:

[con acento español]:  
Buenos días a usted.

A qualifier should also be used when the speaker resumes speaking in their normal voice:

[con voz normal] Perdón, no sé por qué  
estaba hablando con un acento.

## Sound effects

Sound effects that are plot-pertinent or lend helpful context to a scene should be identified when they are not obvious from visuals or context.

### EXAMPLES:

When a sound is heard once:

[puerta azota]

When a sound is heard repeatedly:

[hombre tosiendo]

Avoid SDH subtitles with:

- Redundant sound effects (if we see someone pour a glass of water or shoot a gun, it's not necessary to indicate [agua vertiendo] or [disparo])
- Missing plot-pertinent sound effects (if someone reacts to a noise heard off-screen, for example, the sound should be indicated)
- Inaccurate sound effects (a door slam is indicated as a gunshot, for example)

**Note:** Sound effects and dialogue should not appear in the same subtitle unless absolutely necessary due to time/reading-speed constraints.

### EXAMPLE 1 (preferred):

SUB 1: [puerta azota a lo lejos]

SUB 2: ¿Qué fue eso?

### EXAMPLE 2 (only if needed in extreme cases):

-[puerta azota a lo lejos]

-¿Qué fue eso?

## On-screen Text

SDH streams should not subtitle any redundant on-screen text. This applies to both narrative text (text that is part of principal photography) and burn-in text (text that has been added in post-production).

If a template that contains on-screen text is reformatted into an SDH file, dialogue subtitles should be re-timed to close any gaps that are created when narrative and burn-in subtitles are removed.

## 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 the Real Academia Española as the primary source for grammar.

<http://www.rae.es/recursos/diccionarios/drae>

<http://www.rae.es/recursos/diccionarios/dpd>

Fundéu BBVA is also an accepted source for language inquiries.

<http://www.fundeu.es>

### **Titles and names:**

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.

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.



**Abbreviations:**

- Abbreviations should be avoided if possible. However, they can be used to facilitate reading speed when the space on screen is limited.
- EE.UU. and EUA are the correct abbreviations to refer to Estados Unidos. USA and US are not accepted by the RAE.
- Abbreviations should keep accent marks accordingly if the complete word has them (e.g. telef. for teléfono; pról. for prólogo).
- Some abbreviations commonly used are: Ud., Sr., Sra., Dr., Dra.
- Please note that the shortened versions of measurement units are written without a period at the end (km, m, mm).
- More information about the proper use of abbreviations: <http://lema.rae.es/dpd/?key=abreviatura>
- A list of the most common abbreviations: <http://www.rae.es/diccionario-panhispanico-de-dudas/apendices/abreviaturas>

**Capital letters:**

Capital letters should have their corresponding accent marks, both on words that are fully written with capitals (e.g. ATENCIÓN, POR FAVOR) as well as on initial letters of words (e.g. Su hijo se llama Ángel).

**Acronyms:**

- Acronyms are written without spaces or periods: ONU, OTAN, FBI
- Accent marks should be avoided in acronyms if they are capitalized in their entirety.
- Some acronyms have become common words; these should follow the regular accentuation rules (e.g. láser).
- For a more detailed explanation, please refer to <http://lema.rae.es/dpd/?key=siglas>

**Brand and character names:**

- Do not translate brand names if they are known and relevant to the plot (Apple, Nike, Rolex).
- If a brand is unknown in our region and there is a risk of the viewer missing the meaning of the context because of it, translate from the generic term (e.g. if Clorox isn't known in Mexico, translate from the word "bleach" instead: "cloro").
- Do not translate proper names (such as Peter and Smith).
- Translate nicknames (such as Cranky Maria) if they are relevant or plot-pertinent.
- Translate other historical or popular characters (such as Santa Claus, Tooth Fairy) — translate.

## 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:

Eso es p\*\*\*\*\* genial.

## 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:

Le voy a decir *arrivederci* a los dulces por un tiempo.

## 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*)

Speaker IDs and qualifiers should be added as needed, but should not be italicized.

## EXAMPLES:

[John] *Nuestra historia comienza aquí,  
hace 30 años.*

[operadora en el teléfono]: *Por favor espere en la línea.  
Un agente se comunicará enseguida.*

## Numerals

Numbers one to ten should be spelled out (uno, dos, tres). Numbers 11 and up should be represented numerically (12, 19, 35).

Numbers between 1000 and 9999 do not require a dot. Numbers 10 000 and up should be written with a space before the zeros. Here is a link with a useful explanation about numbers: <http://www.fundeu.es/recomendacion/numeralescompuestos/>

Exceptions:

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

Convert to the metric system: kilometers (km), centimeters (cm), meters (m), kilograms (kg)

Also convert temperature from Fahrenheit to "grados centígrados" or Celsius.

Time references should reflect what is being said on screen (e.g. if someone is saying "we should meet at noon", we shouldn't write "we should meet at 12:00pm" or viceversa). The only exception to this rule would be space limitations. Also, when writing the times do not omit the zeros (1:00 pm, 3:00 pm and not 1 pm, 2 pm).

When it comes to decades, please write the numbers without the apostrophe ('). Following that rule we would write "la década de los 90" and not "la década de los '90" or "la década de los noventa"; "los 80" and not "los '80". For the decade that goes from the year 2000 to 2009, we use "la década de los 2000".

Centuries should be written using the Roman Numerals system.

## Currency

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

### EXAMPLE 1:

Vendería la aplicación por 99 centavos o \$1.29.

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

### EXAMPLE 2:

Eso te costará 129 o 199  
dependiendo en el modelo.

Currency should not be converted (dollars to pesos). On that note, please be aware that a billion in the United States is a thousand million in our region ("2 billion" should be subtitled as "dos mil millones"). Refer to <http://www.fundeu.es/recomendacion/elbillion-inglesno-equivaleal-billon-espanol-858/> for further information on quantities.

## 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.
- Punctuation marks (including commas, periods, question marks, etc.) should be placed outside of the quotation marks unless they are part of the quoted material.
- 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 (example: Ella dijo: "No me digas 'Relájate' ni una vez más").
- Colons can be used when appropriate. Semicolons should not be used.

For detailed information about punctuation, you can check: <http://lema.rae.es/dpd/?key=signos%20ortogr%C3%A1ficos>

## Songs

Song lyrics should generally only be titled if 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.

Songs actuated on-screen or heard within the scene should be identified if possible.

### EXAMPLE:

["El rey" de José Alfredo Jiménez  
suena en las bocinas]

Generic descriptors should be used for non-identifiable songs actuated or heard within the scene.

### EXAMPLE:

[música country sonando en las bocinas]

Songs heard on the soundtrack should generally not be identified or indicated.

When titling lyrics:

- 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.
- Insert a quaver symbol (♪) at the beginning and two (♪♪) at the end of each subtitle. There should be a space between the quavers and the lyrics.

### CORRECT:

♪ *Una piedra en el camino*  
*Me enseñó que mi destino* ♪♪

### INCORRECT:

*Una piedra en el camino,*  
*me enseñó que mi destino,*

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 titled.

## **Translator Credits**

There should not be a subtitle for a translator credit.