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captioning key

GUIDELINES AND PREFERRED TECHNIQUES

A PUBLICATION OF THE

DC MP

Described and Captioned
Media Program

Captioning Key

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Appendices _____ 23

Becoming an Approved Captioning Service Vendor _____ 29

WELCOME TO THE DCMP *CAPTIONING KEY!*

Captioning is the key to opening up a world of information for persons with hearing loss or literacy needs. There are more than 30 million Americans with some type of hearing loss. Millions of others are illiterate, learning to read, or use English as a second language.

The first captioning of any kind was performed in the late 1950's by Captioned Films for the Deaf, the ancestor of DCMP, two decades before the advent of closed captioning on broadcast television. The first edition of the *Captioning Key* was published in 1994, and these guidelines were based on decades of experience by DCMP (then called Captioned Films and Videos Program), review of captioning research, and examination of standards developed by various captioning vendors. The *Captioning Key* applied to both entertainment and educational media has been used for consumers at all levels (children through adults), has received international distribution, and has been translated into other languages.

These guidelines are a key for vendors performing captioning for the DCMP. (The DCMP provides information on how to become an approved vendor on our Web site.) The information is applicable to vendors and other businesses that provide closed captioning (CC) and subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing (SDH) of all types of media at various levels. Thus, these guidelines will also be useful to media producers/distributors and others who are considering captioning their products or learning about captioning. Some background information and rationale are included for the novice.

A Definition of Captioning

Captioning is the process of converting the audio content of a television broadcast, webcast, film, video, CD-ROM, DVD, live event, or other productions into text and displaying the text on a screen or monitor. Captions not only display words as the textual equivalent of spoken dialogue or narration, but they also include speaker identification, sound effects, and music description.

It is important that the captions are (1) synchronized and appear at approximately the same time as the audio is delivered; (2) equivalent and equal in content to that of the audio, including speaker identification and sound effects; and (3) accessible and readily available to those who need or want them.

The DCMP Captioning Philosophy

The DCMP captioning philosophy is that all captioning should include as much of the original language as possible; words or phrases which may be unfamiliar to the audience should not be replaced with simple synonyms. However, altering the original transcription may be necessary to provide time for the caption to be completely read and for it to be in synchronization with the audio.

ABOUT THE *CAPTIONING KEY*

The first edition of the *Captioning Key* was developed in 1994. The Captioned Films and Videos Program (CFV), now the DCMP, was given the responsibility by the U.S. Department of Education to develop a list of approved captioning service vendors that would be selected by CFV to perform its captioning of movies and educational films/videos. Captioning manuals were requested from major captioning vendors in the United States and utilized as a basis for developing the first *Captioning Key*. CFV staff experienced in writing and proofing/editing captions also contributed their expertise. This staff included Bill Stark, Dianne Stark, Teresa Rogers, and Missy McManus. Bill, Dianne, and Teresa continue with the DCMP today, and have contributed to all subsequent revisions of the *Captioning Key*.

About the Described and Captioned Media Program

The DCMP is a unique accessible media resource serving the United States and its territories. DCMP services include: (1) a library of free-loan described and captioned educational media for K-12, (2) a clearinghouse of information on media access, and (3) a center for training and evaluation of captioning service providers.

2008 marked the Golden Anniversary of this federally supported program. Visit DCMP@Fifty to read an article detailing the history of the program, a time line highlighting important events in accessible media history, and to access various resources to learning more about the history of captioning.

About the National Association of the Deaf

The National Association of the Deaf (NAD) was established in 1880 by deaf leaders who recognized the right of the American deaf community to use sign language, to congregate on issues important to them, and to have its interests represented at the national level. These beliefs remain true to this day, with American Sign Language as a core value. As a nonprofit federation, the mission of the NAD is to preserve, protect, and promote the civil, human, and linguistic rights of deaf Americans. The advocacy scope of the NAD is broad, covering the breadth of a lifetime and impacting future generations in the areas of early intervention, education, employment, health care, technology, telecommunications, youth leadership, and more.

About the Authors

Bill Stark *Project Director* – DCMP

"I learned to caption films at a summer workshop in California for the old Captioned Films for the Deaf (CFD) program. My teacher was the "Father of Closed Captioning," Dr. Malcolm "Mac" Norwood, who monitored my work and the work of others for several summers. When the first *Captioning Key* was developed in 1994, the CFD captioning manual developed by Mac and his team provided much useful information, and in fact, many of the CFD caption-writer guidelines had been incorporated into the captioning manuals being utilized at several major captioning vendors at that time."

Dianne Stark *Accessible Media Administrator* - DCMP

"I used captioned films and videos for 15 years as a classroom teacher of students who were deaf or hard of hearing. Firsthand I observed the critical learning value of captioned media and learned the importance of their readability. Later I had the opportunity to apply what I learned into my direct involvement in captioning production and leading teams to develop standards and guidelines. It has been gratifying through the years to help several of today's major captioning vendors get their start in media accessibility and to confirm that the *Captioning Key* and our work with various vendors had positive impact on television and home video captioning. Continual feedback from captioning vendors, teachers, and other consumers has also been invaluable in subsequent revisions of the guidelines."

Teresa Rogers *Accessibility Coordinator* – DCMP

"As a deaf person and former classroom teacher, I have long advocated for consistency and quality in captioning. I have spent the last 15 years monitoring captioning errors and omissions in educational materials as well as in movies, television, and other forms of media. I have observed that both children and adults who are deaf or hard of hearing are often deprived of the opportunity to access, analyze, learn, evaluate, and fully participate in the mainstream of American culture because of the lack of captioning or faulty presentation of it. Captioning is essential to acquiring information and thriving (even surviving) in our society. The *Captioning Key* remains a unique document for opening a world of information for persons with a hearing loss or literacy needs."

QUALITY CAPTIONING

People everywhere are entitled to equal access to information and should have the opportunity to contribute to that information. A bonus to providing access and opportunity for youth and adults with disabilities is that accessible information is more useful to everyone.

Quality Captioning Must Be:

Accurate

Errorless transcription is the goal for each production.

Consistent

Uniformity in style and presentation of all captioning features is crucial for viewer understanding.

Clear

A complete textual representation of the audio, including speaker identification and non-speech information, provides clarity.

Readable

Captions are displayed with enough time to be read completely, are in synchronization with the audio, and are not obscured by (nor do they obscure) the visual content.

Equal

Equal access requires that the meaning and intention of the material is completely preserved.

TEXT

Text refers to the appearance and presentation of the letters and words. Text considerations include case, font, line division, and caption placement.

Case

Mixed case characters are preferred for readability. However, capital letters are used for an individual word or a single phrase to denote emphasis or shouting.

Font

A font, or typeface, is a set of characters at a certain size, weight, and style. Sometimes font selection is not possible, but often it is. Consistency throughout the media is extremely important.

1. Characters need to be a medium weight font. The example below is ideal.

THE WEIGHT OF THIS FONT IS TOO HEAVY:

2. Characters must be sans serif, have a drop or rim shadow, and be proportionally spaced.

3. The font must include upper- and lowercase letters with descenders that drop below the baseline. Pick a font and spacing technique that does not allow overlap with other characters, ascenders, or descenders.

4. The use of a translucent box is preferred so that the text will be clearer, especially on light backgrounds.

5. Multi-lined captions should be left aligned when technically possible.

Line Division

When a sentence is broken into two or more lines of captions, it should be broken at a logical point where speech normally pauses unless it would exceed the 32-characters-per-line requirement.

1. Do not break a modifier from the word it modifies. Example:

INAPPROPRIATE	APPROPRIATE
Mark pushed his black	Mark pushed
truck.	his black truck.

2. Do not break a prepositional phrase. Example:

INAPPROPRIATE
Mary scampered under
the table.

APPROPRIATE
Mary scampered
under the table.

3. Do not break a person's name nor a title from the name with which it is associated. Examples:

INAPPROPRIATE
Bob and Susan
Smythe are at the movies.

APPROPRIATE
Bob and Susan Smythe
are at the movies.

Suzy and Professor
Barker are here.

Suzy and Professor Barker
are here.

4. Do not break a line after a conjunction. Example:

INAPPROPRIATE
In seconds she arrived, and
he ordered a drink.

APPROPRIATE
In seconds she arrived,
and he ordered a drink.

5. Do not break an auxiliary verb from the word it modifies. Example:

INAPPROPRIATE
Mom said I could
have gone to the movies.

APPROPRIATE
Mom said I could have gone
to the movies.

6. Never end a sentence and begin a new sentence on the same line unless they are short, related sentences containing one or two words. Example:

INAPPROPRIATE
He suspected that his face
turned pale. He knew he

wouldn't be able to speak
if spoken to. Running toward

the void, he halted…

APPROPRIATE
He suspected that his face
turned pale.

He knew he wouldn't be able
to speak if spoken to.

Running toward the void,
he halted…

Caption Placement

Caption placement (vertical and horizontal) refers to the location of captions on the screen. Placement is not possible on all players, but when it is, it's very important.

1. Most captions are placed on the bottom two lines, but placement must not interfere with existing visuals/graphics, such as maps, illustrations, names of countries, job titles, or the names, faces, or mouths of speakers. Should interference occur, captions should be placed at the top of the screen. If placing captions at the top of the screen also interferes with visuals/graphics, place captions elsewhere on the screen where they do not interfere.

2. It is preferred that there are no more than two lines per caption.

3. Captions that have two or more lines must be left-aligned. Example:

INAPPROPRIATE	**APPROPRIATE**
Today's event is the Monster Truck Rally.	Today's event is the Monster Truck Rally.

4. It is essential to place all captions within reasonable margins. This will avoid the possibility of missing characters at right or left screen or missing descenders/ascenders at bottom or top screen.

5. For media with one offscreen narrator and no preexisting graphics, captions should be left-aligned at center screen on the bottom two lines.

6. Single-line captions should be centered on the bottom line.

7. Three- or four-line captions are occasionally acceptable if a one- or two-line caption would interfere with preexisting graphics or be confusing with regard to speaker identification.

8. In the case where essential sound effects are used simultaneously with dialogue that is captioned, the captions that identify the sound effects should be placed at the top of the screen.

9. Captioned dialogue must be placed under the speaker as long it does not interfere with graphics or other preexisting features.

10. When people onscreen speak simultaneously, place the captions underneath the speakers. Do not use other speaker identification techniques, like hyphens. If this is not possible due to the length of the caption or interference with onscreen graphics, caption each speaker at different timecodes.

11. If a speaker continuously moves from one onscreen location to another, one placement for captions of that speaker's communication must be used. Speaker identification may be added for clarification. (Confusion occurs when captions jump around the screen.)

12. When a person is thinking or dreaming, place the italicized caption(s) above the speaker's head and add a description in brackets, such as the word "thinking," above the captioned thoughts.

LANGUAGE MECHANICS

Language mechanics incorporate the proper use of spelling, grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and other factors deemed necessary for high-quality captioned media. Rules included in these guidelines are primarily those which are unique to captioning and speech-to-text.

Spelling and Capitalization

1. Be consistent in the spelling of words throughout the production, including vocabulary that can be spelled either as one or two words or in hyphenated form. For conventional words, dictionaries, and style guides must be followed. Proper names, technical terms, and specialized language must be verified though specialty references or directly from an authoritative source. Remember that no single reference source can claim to be error free.

2. Do not use British spellings or punctuation.

3. Do not emphasize a word using all capital letters except to indicate screaming.

4. Be consistent in the spelling of words throughout the media. This includes vocabulary that can be spelled either as one or two words or in hyphenated form.

5. Capitalize proper nouns for speaker identification. All other speaker identification should be lowercased unless this identification is being used as a proper noun. Examples:

   INAPPROPRIATE   **APPROPRIATE**
   (bobby)   (Bobby)

   (Male Narrator)   (male narrator)

6. Lowercase sound effects, including both description and onomatopoeia, except when a proper noun is part of the description. Examples:

   INAPPROPRIATE   **APPROPRIATE**
   [Machine Gun Firing]   [machine gun firing]
   Rat-a-tat-tat   rat-a-tat-tat

   [Plinky Squealing]   [Plinky squealing]

Punctuation and Grammar

Always follow conventional rules of Standard English to the greatest extent possible, utilizing style guides to reach sound decisions.

Captioning spontaneous speech can be very difficult, as real conversations often contain improper grammar or run-on sentences, dialect, and slang. Problems are compounded with restrictions of time and space. As

punctuation cannot correct non-grammatical speech, its role in captioning is to facilitate clarity and ease of reading.

As a general rule, written English language depends largely on word order to make the relationships between words clear. When word order alone is not sufficient to establish these relationships, there is little choice but to resort to punctuation that is sometimes unique to the captioning process.

Hyphens and Dashes

1. Nonessential information that needs special emphasis should be conveyed by double hyphens or a single long dash.

2. When a speaker is interrupted and another speaker finishes the sentence, the interruption should be conveyed by double hyphens or a single long dash.

3. When a speaker stutters, caption what is said.

    INAPPROPRIATE   **APPROPRIATE**
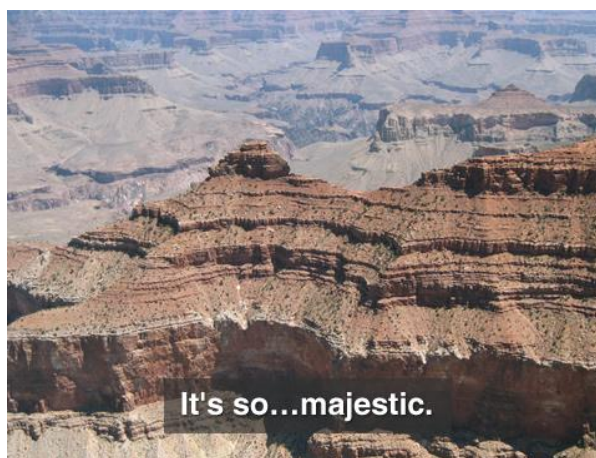   book   b-b-b-ook

4. When captioning spelling (including fingerspelling), separate capital letters with hyphens. Example:

    A-N-T-I-O-N-E-T-T-E

Ellipses

1. Use an ellipsis when there is a significant pause within a caption.

2. Do not use an ellipsis to indicate that the sentence continues into the next caption.

3. Use an ellipsis to lead into or out of audio relating to an onscreen graphic unless there is a complete sentence in the graphic that is more appropriately introduced by a colon.

Quotation Marks

1. Use quotation marks for onscreen readings from a poem, book, play, journal, or letter. However, use quotation marks and italics for offscreen readings or voice-overs.

2. Beginning quotation marks should be used for each caption of quoted material except for the last caption. The last caption should have only the ending quotation marks. Example:

    Reading from a journal…

INAPPROPRIATE	APPROPRIATE
"Mother knelt down and began thoughtfully fitting"	"Mother knelt down and began thoughtfully fitting
"the ragged edges of paper together."	"the ragged edges of paper together.
"The process was watched with spellbound interest."	The process was watched with spellbound interest."

Spacing

1. Spaces should not be inserted before ending punctuation, after opening and before closing parentheses and brackets, before and after double hyphens and dashes, or before/between/after the periods of an ellipsis. Examples:

INAPPROPRIATE	APPROPRIATE
(narrator)	(narrator)
I am happy . . . thank you.	I am happy…thank you.

2. A space should be inserted after the beginning music icon (♪) and before the ending music icon(s). Example:

   ♪ There's a bad moon rising ♪

Italics

Use of italics is not always technically possible (e.g., on certain Internet players), but when it is, the guidelines below apply. When it is not an option, quotation marks are appropriate in certain situations (e.g., foreign words) and identification is appropriate in others (e.g., the source of essential background audio). Use italics as follows:

1. A voice-over reading of a poem, book, play, journal, letter, etc. (This is also quoted material, so quotation marks are also needed.)

2. When a person is dreaming, thinking, or reminiscing.

3. When there is background audio that is essential to the plot, such as a PA system or TV.

4. The first time a new word is being defined, but do not italicize the word thereafter.

5. Offscreen dialogue, narrator (see Exception 2 below), sound effects, or music (this includes background music).

6. The offscreen narrator when there are multiple speakers onscreen or offscreen.

7. Speaker identification when the dialogue is in italics and speaker identification is necessary.

8. Foreign words and phrases, unless they are in an English dictionary.

9. When a particular word is heavily emphasized in speech. Example:

   You *must* go!

Exceptions to the use of italics include:

1. When an entire caption is already in italicized format, use Roman type to set off a word that would normally be italicized.

2. If there is only one person speaking and no other speakers, whether on- or offscreen, use Roman type with no italics.

3. Do not italicize while translating for a person onscreen. Example:

   INAPPROPRIATE   **APPROPRIATE**
   (female interpreter)   (female interpreter)
   I enjoyed New Mexico.   I enjoyed New Mexico.

PRESENTATION RATE

The presentation rate is the number of captioned words per minute that are displayed onscreen.

This is a crucial factor in captioning, as the viewer needs time to read the captions, integrate the captions and picture, and internalize and comprehend the message. Editing of text may sometimes be necessary to achieve these goals, but a caption should maintain the original meaning, content, and essential vocabulary.

Each word is counted when calculating the presentation rate, as opposed to basing the calculation on the number of characters. In addition, speaker identification, sound effects, and other similar elements must be included in the calculations.

For more on presentation rates, read the *Captioning Presentation Rate Research* document on the *Captioning Key Appendices* page.

Specifications and Guidelines

1. All lower- to middle-level educational media should be captioned at a presentation rate range not to exceed 120–130 words per minute (wpm). Upper-level educational media may be captioned slightly above the 120–130 wpm range. No caption should remain onscreen less than two seconds. (A words-per-minute generator can be found in the HTML version of the *Captioning Key for Educational Media* at http://captioningkey.org/presentation_rate.html.)

2. Special-interest media for adults require a presentation rate range not to exceed 150–160 wpm. The presentation rate can be increased if heavy editing radically changes the original meaning, content, or language structure. No caption should remain onscreen less than two seconds.

3. Theatrical productions for children should be captioned at a rate range not to exceed 150–160 wpm. No caption should remain onscreen less than two seconds.

4. Theatrical productions for adults should be captioned at a near-verbatim rate, but no caption should remain onscreen less than two seconds or exceed 235 wpm.

Editing

Many educational, special interest, and theatrical media are not scripted to allow the time necessary for the process of reading captions and often have extremely rapid narration/dialogue. Therefore, minor editing may be necessary. No caption should remain onscreen for less than two seconds.

1. Editing is performed only when a caption exceeds a specified presentation rate limit. Proper editing should maintain both the original meaning, content, essential vocabulary, and meet presentation rate requirements. Borrowing 15 frames before and after the audio occurs is hardly noticeable to the viewer. This "borrowing" technique can be used occasionally when presentation rate is a factor. Examples:

ORIGINAL NARRATION
"This does violate the principle of treating similar enumerations the same way."

INAPPROPRIATE	**APPROPRIATE**
This does break	This violates
the principle	the principle
of treating numbers	of treating similar
the same.	enumerations the same.

ORIGINAL NARRATION
"Will you get out of here!"

INAPPROPRIATE	**APPROPRIATE**
Will you leave now!	Will you get out!

ORIGINAL NARRATION
"Thunderstorms and dangerous lightning can come suddenly out of nowhere."

INAPPROPRIATE	**APPROPRIATE**
Storms and lightning	Thunderstorms
can come suddenly	and dangerous lightning
out of nowhere.	can come suddenly.

2. If necessary to maintain reading rate, redundant and/or nonessential information can be removed. Examples:

   ORIGINAL NARRATION
   "It is really, really difficult to find good help."

   EDITED
   It is really difficult
   to find good help.

   ORIGINAL NARRATION
   Like I said before, this bill on the House floor is an insult to the country.

   EDITED

   This bill on the House floor
   is an insult to the country.

3. The only times when presentation rate is ignored are when any person is quoted, a well-known or famous person is speaking onscreen, poems and other published works are quoted, and/or song lyrics are sung. These must be captioned verbatim.

4. Do not caption the same, or nearly the same, information that is already shown onscreen.

SOUND EFFECTS

Sound effects are sounds other than music, narration, or dialogue. They are captioned if it is necessary to the understanding and/or enjoyment of the media.

1. A description of sound effects, in brackets, should include the source of the sound.

[audience cheering]

2. Description can be eliminated if the source of the sound can clearly be seen onscreen.

grrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr

3. If the presentation rate permits, also include onomatopoeia. A study by Gallaudet University showed that "A combination of description and onomatopoeia was the preference of more consumers (56%) than was description alone (31%) or onomatopoeia alone (13%)."

4. Offscreen sound effects should be italicized, if italics are available. This includes background music.

5. Place the description of the sound effect as close as possible to the sound source.

6. Both sound effects and onomatopoeias must be lowercased.

7. If description is used for offscreen sound effects, it is not necessary to repeat the source of the sound if it is making the same sound a few captions later. Example:

FIRST CAPTION
[pig squealing]

LATER CAPTION
[squealing continues]

8. The description should be on the first line of the sound effect caption, separate from the onomatopoeia. Examples:

INAPPROPRIATE
[machine gun firing] rat-a-tat-tat

APPROPRIATE
[machine gun firing]
rat-a-tat-tat

9. Use punctuation to indicate speed or pace of sound. Examples:

SLOW
[clock chiming]
dong…dong…dong

RAPID
[gun firing]
bang, bang, bang

10. A sound represented by a repeated word is not hyphenated. A sound represented by two different words is hyphenated. Examples:

REPEATED WORDS
[doorbell ringing]
ding, ding

TWO DIFFERENT WORDS
[doorbell ringing]
ding-dong

11. When describing a sustained sound, use the present participle form of the verb. When describing an abrupt sound, use the third person verb form. Examples:

SUSTAINED SOUND
[dog barking]
woof, woof…woof

[papers crinkling]

ABRUPT SOUND
[dog barks]
woof!

[papers crinkle]

12. Caption background sound effects only when they are essential to the plot.

13. Caption the audience response only when it is essential to a better understanding of onscreen or offscreen action. Example:

INAPPROPRIATE
(John)
Bring out the band!

APPROPRIATE
(John)
Bring out the band!

[audience cheering]

14. When possible, use specific rather than vague, general terms to describe sounds. Examples:

VAGUE/GENERAL
[horse running]

[bird singing]

SPECIFIC
[horse galloping]

[robin singing]

15. Never use the past tense when describing sounds. Captions should be synchronized with the sound and are therefore in the present tense.

SPEAKER IDENTIFICATION

Establishing the identity of both onscreen and offscreen speakers is vital for clarity. When names are unknown, be as specific as possible in providing a label.

1. When possible, use caption placement to identify an onscreen speaker by placing the caption under the speaker.

2. If offscreen speakers are speaking simultaneously, appropriate speaker identification must be added.

3. When a speaker cannot be identified by placement and his/her name is known, the speaker's name should be in parentheses. Also, the speaker's name needs to be on a line of its own, separate from the captions. Example:

    INAPPROPRIATE   **APPROPRIATE**
    [Jack] I don't see   (Jack)
    how blasting would work   I don't see how blasting
    on this building.   would work on this building.

4. When a speaker cannot be identified by placement and his/her name is unknown, identify the speaker using the same information a hearing viewer has (e.g., "female #1," "male narrator").

5. If a speaker is offscreen and his/her offscreen position is known, place the captions to the far right or left, as close as possible onscreen to the offscreen speaker's assumed position.

6. Do not identify the speaker by name until the speaker is introduced in the audio or by an onscreen graphic.

7. If there is only one narrator, identify as (male narrator) or (female narrator) at the beginning of the media. It is not necessary to identify gender for each caption thereafter.

8. When an actor is portraying another person or character, identify the actor as the person being portrayed. Example:

    (as George Washington)
    If the freedom of speech
    is taken away,

    then dumb and silent
    we may be led,

    like sheep
    to the slaughter.

SYNCHRONIZATION

Captions should closely match the original audio. Maintaining the textual unity with picture and sound ensures clarity, and can be especially important to hard of hearing viewers.

1. Borrowing 15 frames before and after the audio occurs is hardly noticeable to the viewer. This "borrowing" technique can be used occasionally when presentation rate is a factor.

2. Do not simultaneously caption different speakers if they are not speaking at the same time.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Spoken language is rich and full of meaning. However, it also consists of oddly formed sentences and even word play. Accuracy, clarity, and readability are challenges for the captioner.

Intonation, Play on Words, and No Audio

1. If the speaker is not visible onscreen, or visual clues that denote the emotional state are not shown, indicate the speaker's emotion. Example:

   INAPPROPRIATE
   Well, whatever!

   APPROPRIATE
   [angrily]
   Well, whatever!

2. When a person is whispering, captions as:

   [whispering]
   Okay, you go first.

3. When feasible, describe puns. Example:

   Why do they call her "Ouisy"?
   ["Wheezy"]

4. When people are seen talking, but there is no audio, caption as [no audio] or [silence].

Foreign Language, Dialect, Slang, and Phonetics

1. If possible, caption the actual foreign words. If it is not possible to caption the words, use a description (e.g., [speaking French]). Never translate into English.

2. If possible, use accent marks, diacritical marks, and other indicators.

3. Indicate regional accent at the beginning of the first caption. Example:

INAPPROPRIATE	**APPROPRIATE**
If y'all want me to.	[Southern accent] If y'all want me to.

4. Keep the flavor of dialect. Example:

INAPPROPRIATE	**APPROPRIATE**
You are sure not from around here.	You sho' ain't from 'round here.

5. Keep the flavor of the speaker's language when necessary to portray a character's personality. This includes captioning profanity and slang. Examples:

INAPPROPRIATE	**APPROPRIATE**
I'm not going anywhere.	I ain't going nowhere.
[cursing]	Damn!

6. When a word is spoken phonetically, caption it the way it is commonly written. Examples:

ORIGINAL NARRATION	**CAPTIONED AS**
"N-double-A-C-P"	NAACP
"www dot D-C-M-P dot org"	www.dcmp.org
"eight or nine hundred"	800 or 900
"a thousand"	a thousand
"one thousand"	1000

Music

1. When captioning music, use descriptions that indicate the mood. Be as objective as possible. Avoid subjective words, such as "delightful," "beautiful," or "melodic."

2. If music contains lyrics, caption the lyrics verbatim. The lyrics should be introduced with the name of the vocalist/vocal group, the title (in brackets) if known/significant, and if the presentation rate permits.

[Dinah Washington singing "Mad about the Boy"]

3. Caption lyrics with music icons (♪). Use one music icon at the beginning and end of each caption within a song, but use two music icons at the end of the last line of a song.

♪ The boys are back in town ♪♪

4. A description (in brackets) should be used for instrumental/background music or when verbatim captioning would exceed the presentation rate. If known, the description should include the performer/composer and the title. Examples:

[Louis Armstrong plays
"Hello Dolly"]

[lyrical flute solo]

[pianist playing
the national anthem]

5. Beware of misplaced modifiers in descriptions. Example:

INAPPROPRIATE   **APPROPRIATE**

[frantic piano playing]   [frantic piano music]

[frantic piano music]

6. For background music that is not important to the content of the program, place a music icon in the upper right corner of the screen.

APPENDICIES

Captioning Presentation Rate Research

This appendix is a research document which contains a conglomerate of studies related to both children and adults and how they view, read, and prefer captions. Initially, it seems to be common sense that verbatim captioning is the ideal, the mark of true equal access. However, it may be possible for spoken audio to be delivered so quickly that most people cannot read its verbatim captioning, which seems counter-productive to the goal of equal access.

Additional research is needed to determine how fast captions should appear on the screen and what presentation rates people prefer. These critically important issues have only partially been addressed. But there is an existing body of research and study that supports the DCMP policy and philosophy. Much of this documentation can be reviewed in its entirety from the DCMP clearinghouse. Notes on these studies follow.

The Captioning Presentation Rate Research document may be downloaded at:
http://www.captioningkey.com/captioning_presentation_research.pdf.

Numbers
Experts don't always agree on rules for writing numbers or numerals. Captionists should follow a standard style manual, remembering to be consistent, or use this relatively detailed overview.

1. Unless otherwise specified below, spell out all numbers from one to ten, but use numerals for all numbers over ten. Examples:

   INAPPROPRIATE   **APPROPRIATE**
   The fifty-four DVDs   The 54 DVDs
   need to be shelved.   need to be shelved.

   He's at the thirty, the twenty,   He's at the 30, the 20,
   and scores!   and scores!

2. Spell out any number that begins a sentence as well as any related numbers. Example:

   Two hundred guests
   and eleven guides entered.

3. Spell out casual, nonemphatic numbers. Example:

   He gave me
   hundreds of reasons.

4. Numerals with four digits can either have a comma or not. Be consistent throughout the media production. For numerals having over five digits, a comma is necessary. Example:

   INAPPROPRIATE   **APPROPRIATE**
   50000   50,000

5. Use numerals in a listing of numbers if one or more is above ten and these occur in one caption or one sentence. Example:

   INAPPROPRIATE   **APPROPRIATE**
   Steven has 21 books,   Steven has 21 books,
   11 oranges, and three cats.   11 oranges, and 3 cats.

6. Use numerals when referring to technical and athletic terms. Example:

   He scored 3 goals
   in today's game!

7. When indicating sequence, capitalize the noun and use numerals. Exceptions are the indication of line, note, page, paragraph, size, step, or verse. Examples:

Building 2	page 31
Channel 5	size 12
Chapter III	step 3
Room 438	paragraph 2

Dates

1. Use the numeral plus the lowercase "th," "st," or "nd" when a day of the month is mentioned by itself (no month is referred to). Example:

CAPTIONED AS
Bob went fishing
on the 9th.

ORIGINAL NARRATION
"ninth"

2. When the day precedes the month, use the numeral plus the lowercase "th," "st," or "nd" if the ending is spoken. Example:

CAPTIONED AS
My birthday is
the 17th of June.

ORIGINAL NARRATION
"seventeenth"

3. Use the numeral alone when the day follows the month. Example:

CAPTIONED AS
I will meet you
on May 9.

ORIGINAL NARRATION
"nine" or "ninth"

4. When the month, day, and year are spoken, use the numeral alone for the day, even if an ending ("th," "st," or "nd") is spoken. Example:

CAPTIONED AS
Paul will marry
on July 6, 1996.

ORIGINAL NARRATION
"six" or "sixth"

Time

1. Indicate time of day with numerals only. Examples:

    I awoke at 5:17.

    If you wish to attend,
    you must arrive by 6:25 p.m.

    We were expected to report
    no later than 1400 hours.

    I awoke at 4 o'clock.

2. Always use numerals when the abbreviation "a.m." or "p.m." is present. Double zeros are not necessary to indicate minutes of the hour when a whole number is used with a.m. or p.m. Examples:

    She leaves at 3:20 p.m.
    for the airport.

    Our hours are
    from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

    We're leaving
    at 6 in the morning.

Periods of Time

1. A decade should be captioned as "the 1980s" (not "the 1980's") and "the '50s" (not "the 50's").

2. If a decade or century is in noun form, do not use hyphens. Example:

    This vase is
    from the 17th century.

3. If a period of time is used as an adjective, use a hyphen. Example:

    This 19th-century painting
    was done by Van Gogh.

Fractions

1. Either spell out or use numerals for fractions, keeping this rule consistent throughout the media. If using numerals, insert a space between a whole number and its fraction. Example:

    NUMERAL USED   **FRACTION SPELLED OUT**
    Do you plan   Do you plan to eat
    to eat 1 ½ pizzas?   one and one-half pizzas?

2. Do not mix numerals and spelled-out words within the same sentence. Example:

    INAPPROPRIATE   **APPROPRIATE**
    Malika is 13   Malika is
    and a half years old.   13 ½ years old.

3. If a fraction is used with "million," "billion," "trillion," etc., spell out the fraction. Example:

    The population was
    over one-half million.

4. Fractions expressed in figures should not be followed by endings, such as "sts," "rds," "nds," or "ths." Example:

    INAPPROPRIATE   **APPROPRIATE**
    3/10ths   3/10

Percentages

1. Use numerals and the percent sign to indicate all percentages except at the beginning of a sentence. Examples:

    MIDDLE OF SENTENCE   **BEGINNING OF SENTENCE**
    Only 6% of the votes   Fifty-one percent of the people
    were counted.   voted "yes."

Dollar Amounts

1. Use the numeral plus "cents" or "¢" for amounts under one dollar. Examples:

    I need 15 cents.

    I owe you 32¢.

2. Use the dollar sign plus the numeral for dollar amounts under one million. For whole-dollar amounts of one million and greater, spell out "million," "billion," etc. Examples:

John brought only $11.

Bob brought $6.12. http://www.dcmp.org/Catalog/TitleDetail.aspx?TID=6458

The budget of $13,000
will be sufficient.

Taxes will be reduced
by a total of $13 million.

He owes $13,656,000.

3. Use the word "dollar" only once for a range up to ten. Example:

I hope to find
three or four dollars.

4. Use the dollar sign and numerals when captioning a range of currency over ten dollars. Example:

Alice expected a raise
of $6,000 to $7,000.

Measurements

1. Spell out units of measurement, such as "inches," "feet," "yards," "miles," "ounces," "pounds," and "tablespoons." However, if spoken in shortened form, symbols should be used. For example, if the original narration is "I'm five eight," it should be captioned as:

I'm 5'8".

2. For whole numbers, use numerals. For example, caption "3 cups of sugar" instead of "three cups of sugar."

BECOMING AN APPROVED CAPTIONING SERVICE VENDOR

Anyone interested in acting as a DCMP captioning service vendor should contact the DCMP or the U.S. Department of Education (ED). One of the NAD cooperative agreement tasks is to assist the ED in the evaluation of media captioning.

If approved vendors use the ED's name in their advertisements, the language must be as follows:

"(Name of Vendor) is an approved captioning service vendor for the Described and Captioned Media Program, Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education. This does not infer an endorsement by the Department of Education."

The DCMP has numerous captioning and accessibility information materials regarding the DCMP, captioning, and other related topics. Contact us at:

> Described and Captioned Media Program
> National Association of the Deaf
> 1447 E. Main St.
> Spartanburg, SC 29307
> (800) 237-6213 V
> (800) 237-6819 TTY
> (800) 538-5636 FAX
> info@dcmp.org E-MAIL
> www.dcmp.org WEB

The ED also welcomes questions and comments and may be contacted at: 1-800-USA-LEARN (V).