

Subcatch:

Guideline and Delivery Specifications

Subtitles for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (SDH)

This document contains the guidelines with which subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing (SDH) must comply in order to be placed in Subcatch. Subcatch reserves the right to deny subtitle files that do not comply with the requirements.

Subcatch offers subtitling for films in cinema. At the moment, users read the subtitles on their smartphone or tablet. This may work best at the back of the theatre, with a tablet on a stand, but it's up to users how they do this. In the future, we hope to offer the subtitles using smart glasses.

1. Goal

Aim to convey as completely as possible the sounds in a film that would otherwise be missed by a viewer with an auditory impairment.

Subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing (SDH) make films accessible to people with an auditory impairment. The subtitles show the dialogue, complemented with speaker identification, manner of speaking, relevant sounds and music descriptions. Because of this extra information, it becomes much easier to understand the plot.

2. Technical settings and rules

- Reading speed: Ideally 12 characters per second
 - For adults: 17 CPS (up to 20 max.)
 - For children: 13 CPS (up to 17 max.)
- Maximum of 2 lines of subtitles
- Maximum of 42 characters per line
- Minimum subtitle duration: 1 second
- Maximum subtitle duration: 6 seconds
- Interval: 2-4 frames (consistently choose the same interval)

Reply dash (-)

- Always on a separate line.
 - Did you have text in that series?
 - Yes, a few sentences.
- No reply dash after a speaker identification.
 - Hey, are you coming?
 - SARAH: No, I can't!

Do not use sequence dots or linking dots (...)

- When a sentence is divided over several subtitles, we do not indicate this with dots. This means you don't have to use three dots (sequence dots) at the end of the first subtitle. Where grammatically correct, you can use a comma at the end.

SUBCATCH

- The following subtitle does not have to start with three dots (linking dots) either.
- When a sentence is unfinished, we do use three dots.

Have you talked to him?
-Yes, but it was unclear to me
whether he is available that day.
-But I...

Spaces

- Don't use spaces after a reply dash or before punctuation (question mark or dots).

Text alignment

- Centre all text, even if information appears on the screen.

3. Spotting

In-point

- Subtitles appear just before the speaker starts talking (2 to 5 frames before).

Out-point

- Subtitles disappear after the speaker has finished talking. To give the viewer enough time to read the subtitle, you can let the subtitle run up to 12 frames longer.

Shot changes

- Consider shot changes where possible, but audio is leading.
- We spot the subtitles in the shot in which they belong as much as possible.

Timing

- A subtitle stays on screen for a minimum of one and a maximum of six seconds.
- Between two subtitles, use a consistent interval of 2 to 4 frames.
- When there's a gap between two subtitles of less than 12 frames, let them link up (with the usual interval).

4. What should be subtitled?

All dialogues are subtitled. Summarise and shorten as little as possible, unless reading speed threatens to exceed 18 CPS. In addition, all important background sounds and sound effects (music, laughter, speaker identification) should be subtitled.

Keep in mind the following order of priority:

1. Dialogue
2. Speaker identification and manner of speaking (additional descriptions)
3. Relevant background sounds
4. (Background)music

All sounds, music and speaker identifications are written in capitals.

4.1 Dialogue

The objective is to represent as much as possible of what is being said. However, it is also important to consider the readability of the subtitles.

In concrete terms, this means that you cannot unnecessarily simplify the text in the subtitles or omit important information. It is allowed to omit repetitions or to change 'crooked' sentences (e.g. if a speaker is mistaken), since poor language makes readability of subtitles more difficult.

For drama productions, hesitation / stagger / shouting in the dialogue can be important to understand the interaction between characters. Contrary to what is common in translating subtitles, we can convey this as long as it adds information for the deaf and hard of hearing:

Eh... yes... eh... of course.

Noooo!

4.2 Speaker identification

We don't use colours in the subtitles, so speaker identification is required to clarify who is speaking (when this can't be seen on screen).

- Display the name (or description), clearly but as short as possible, followed by a colon.
- Always use speaker identification when a character starts speaking off-screen.
- When a character is speaking and continues to speak off-screen, only mention this when the images can cause confusion.

Use capital letters for speaker identifications.

To indicate the voice over, you can use VO:

VO: Once upon a time...

POLICE OFFICER: We are here today
to discuss the new city project.

CARLA: Watch out!
WOMAN: Oops, I didn't see you there.

Additional descriptions

Additional descriptions indicate how something is said: e.g. whispering, unintelligible etc.

Use capital letters for this.

EMMA SIGHS DEEPLY:
All good things come to an end.

IN SPANISH: Let's go.

4.3 Sounds

Relevant (background) sounds are described on a separate line. We make these descriptions as active as possible: e.g. a telephone rings, a sheep bleats, street sounds.

The manner of describing depends on the context. When the setting is already clearly thrilling (scared facial expressions, dark space etc.) it is unnecessary to add a description such as THRILLING MUSIC.

Use capital letters for sounds.

PING
What was that?

4.4 Music and lyrics

- If the composer and/or performer are known, mention them with the title of the piece of music.

BEYONCÉ – ALL THE SINGLE LADIES

- In other cases, or when the name of the composer and/or performer are not relevant, give an impression of the music through a short description. Use capital letters for this.

OMINOUS MUSIC

- The maximum subtitle duration does not apply to music descriptions. Music descriptions can remain on screen until they are no longer relevant.

Lyrics should be subtitled as long as they don't overlap with dialogue. Every subtitle containing lyrics should have a musical note at the beginning and end of the subtitle. Use a space between the musical note and the text. Punctuation is usually not necessary.

♪ So all that's left is the proof
that love's not only blind but deaf ♪

5. Technical specifications

To be able to synchronise with the film, SAVT creates an audio hash using the soundtrack of the film. For film the required files need to be delivered in 24fps (unless there's only a DCP at 25fps).

For the Subcatch mastering, the following files must be delivered:

- Audio of the film
Original final mix 24fps continuous – interleaved WAV file (LoRo or LtRt of 5.1)
Bitrate 24 bit, samplerate 48kHz.
- Subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing (SDH)
Format: SRT (UTF-8; please make sure musical notes are displayed correctly)
Start: FFOA (continuous)

For all files the following applies:

- Files start FFOA, at time code 00:00:00:00.
- Clear titles, including framerate, using the following format:
Audio: TITLE_ FRAMERATE_ LANGUAGE_ TYPE_ CHANNELS_ DATE
Ondertiteling: TITLE_ FRAMERATE_ LANGUAGE_ TYPE_ DATE
Type can be LoRo/LtRt/5.1, or SDH. Date can be written as YYYYMMDD.

E.g.: THE_SEARCH_24FPS_EN_SDH_20221230

Note on security: The actual soundtrack does not appear in the app. Only a fingerprint hash and encoded subtitles are offered to the end user. It is not possible to read the subtitles without watching the film itself.

6. Metadata

In order to have your production placed in the Subcatch app and on the website subcatch.nl the following metadata must be supplied per film:

- Title
- Release date
- Genre
- Length (in minutes)
- Language
- MPAA rating
- Director
- Cast
- Film poster (jpeg high resolution)
- Stills (jpeg high resolution)

7. Delivery

The materials for films should be delivered at least 3 business days before the premiere date.

Delivery may vary per organisation and country. If your agreement is to deliver directly to Earcatch Internation B.V., please send all materials to info@earcatch.eu.