Guide to Video Captions

Writing transcripts for open and closed captions
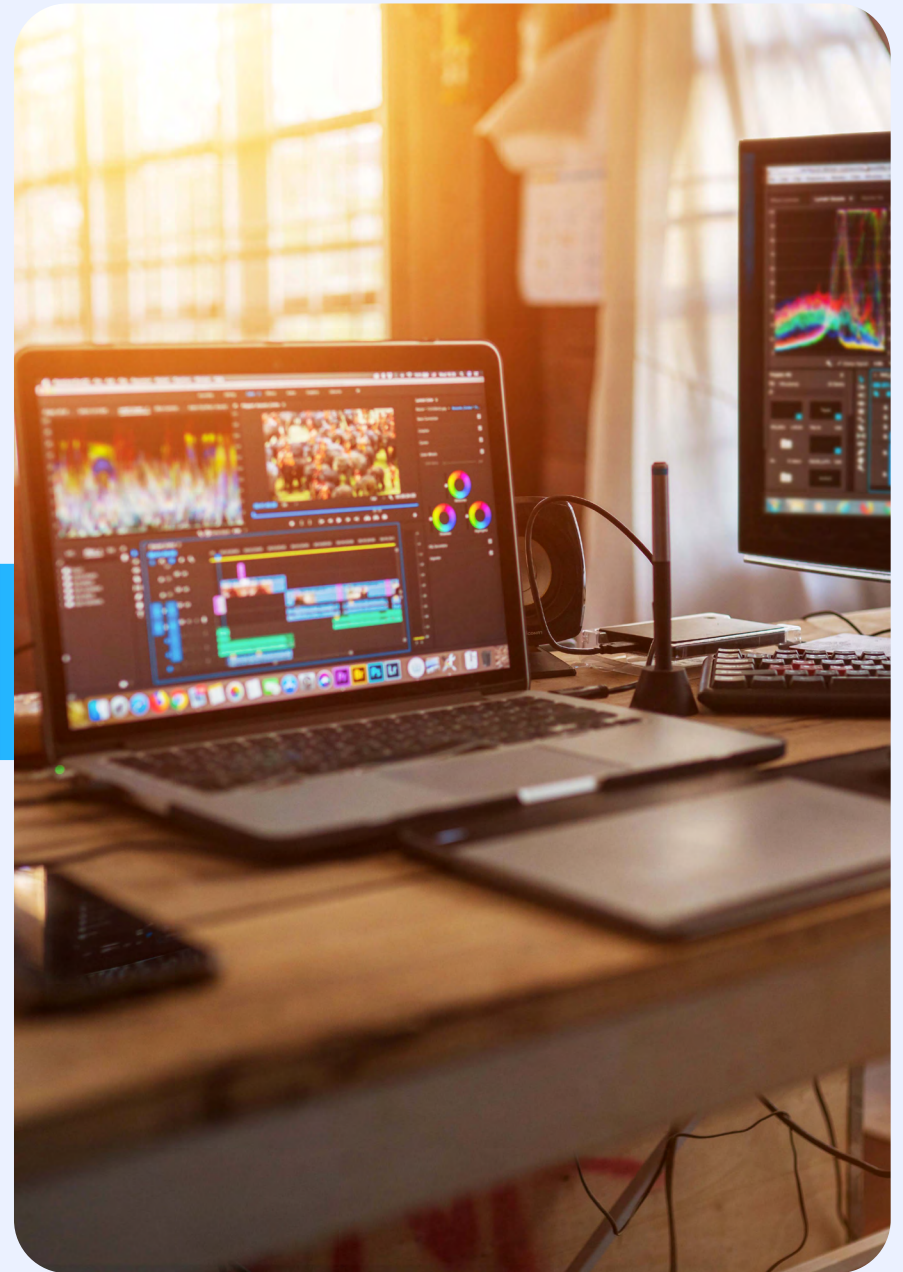
Accessi**blü**

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Captioning Best Practices

Making videos on websites accessible is crucial, and this can be achieved by providing captions or a detailed transcript. Captions can either be open, which means they are always on, or closed, which allows viewers to turn them on or off.

When using open captions or on-screen text in videos, it's crucial that they don't block any vital information or action on the screen.

It's important to note that captions are not part of a video file such as a .mov or .mp4. Rather, they are specialized text files independently generated and then linked to the video player, which lets viewers choose to display them or not. To ensure that your videos are inclusive, it's essential to adhere to some recommended guidlines.

Descriptive Transcripts

- Used for videos that are not captioned or able to display captions.

- Required for audio-only material like recorded lectures or podcasts.

- Best for persons who are deaf and blind or have difficulty processing auditory information.

- Provide a text version of the speech and audio information occurring on-screen.

When Creating Descriptive Transcripts

- Describe all audio information, including music and nature sounds.

  - Formatting like [Jazz Music] or [Sounds of ocean waves] is acceptable.

- A script format is acceptable and should indicate who is speaking Include time-based events that align with the video timing.

- Must be grammatically correct to include the context and correct syntax of words.

Captions

- Can be either closed or open.

  - Open captions are always visible at the bottom of a screen.

  - Closed captions can be turned on/off.

- Are linked to the video player (e.g., the YouTube player) and not part of the video file.

- Captions must be 98% accurate or better with:

  - Correct punctuation and spelling.

  - Correct context of words used (e.g., sine or sign, and there, their, or they're).

- Are REQUIRED for any video broadcast on Television in the United States.

  - This is an FCC Federal requirement.

  - Includes all commercials, programs, and movies. Regardless of how much of a video is used.

Captioning Guidelines:

- 1-2 lines per displayed caption.

- 32 Characters per line across, max.

- Line breaks should follow the natural rhythm of speech.

- Include atmospherics or non-speech audio that occurs.

Subtitles and Captions

- Captions are for viewers with hearing impairments or needing to view the video with the sound off.

- Subtitles are for viewers who do not understand the audio's language.

- Subtitles typically do not include non-speech elements and therefore are not considered accessible for viewers with an auditory disability.

Our Team

Meet our Accessibility Professionals

Our team consists of dedicated, experienced digital agency professionals. In addition, we feature a diverse staff that will focus on your most pressing challenges and offers custom digital solutions to achieve your goals. You deserve no less!

Peter Czech
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Shannon
Accessibility Conformance Specialist

Adriana
Senior Digital Designer

Bernadette
Graphic Designer

John
Graphic Designer

Links to Resources

[21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (CVAA)](#)

[FCC's Closed Captioning Guide for Television](#)

[ADA.gov captioning guide](#)

[About captioning at Section508.gov](#)

[YouTube help page for translations, subtitles, and captions](#)

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