

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.

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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. What should be subtitled?

All dialogues are subtitled. Summarise and shorten as little as possible, unless reading speed threatens to exceed the maximum (see section 3). In addition, all important background sounds and sound effects (music, laughter, speaker identification) should be subtitled if these are not visually represented on screen.

Keep in mind the following order of priority:

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

NB: Forced narratives are not included in the SDH for Subcatch, because these appear on screen.

2.1 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, change the word order 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!

2.2 Speaker identification

When a character speaks off screen, it must be clear who is speaking.

- Use brackets [], with all text in lower case (except for capital letters in proper names and where linguistically correct)
- Display the name (or description) clearly but concisely.
- 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.
- When a character has not been introduced yet, you can use [man] or [woman] for example. You can describe a voice-over as [VO].
- Place the speaker identification and corresponding dialogue on the same line where possible.

[police officer] Stop!

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

[Emma sighs deeply] It's over.

[in Spanish] Let's go.

2.3 Sounds

Relevant (background) sounds are described on a separate line. Where possible, please make these descriptions as active as possible.

[a man laughs loudly]

[a sheep bleats]

Sometimes a short description with a noun is more suitable.

[gun shot]

[ringtone]

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].

Do not forget to describe silences or the ending of a sound when this is relevant, for instance when music stops abruptly.

2.4 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.

[romantic, instrumental music]

[ominous music]

- Music in the scene (like radio for example) can be described using a verb or description:

[Beyoncé's 'All the Single Ladies' is playing]

[jazz music on the radio]

- Audible song lyrics in the same language as the dialogue should be subtitled if they are relevant and don't overlap with dialogue. (Song lyrics in another language are not subtitled, but described as explained above.)
 - 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.
 - Don't use punctuation or capital letters, apart from commas within the lyric line, and question marks.

♪ but you don't really care
for music, do you? ♪

3. Technical settings and rules

- Reading speed:
 - For adults: 17 CPS (up to 20 max., including spaces)
 - For children: 13 CPS (up to 17 max., including spaces)
- Maximum of 2 lines of subtitles
- Maximum of 42 characters per line (incl. spaces and punctuation)
- Minimum subtitle duration: five sixth of a second (i.e. 20 frames for 24fps and 21 frames for 25fps)
- Maximum subtitle duration: 7 seconds
- Interval: 2 frames (2 empty frames between subtitles)

4. Timing

In-time

- A subtitle appears within 3 frames before the speaker starts talking.

Out-time

- 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

Subtitles should be placed in the shot where they belong as much as possible. For a good viewing experience it is important to time the subtitles correctly around shot changes.

- In-point: on the first frame of the new shot (on the shot change)
- Out-point: 2 frames before the shot change
- When the dialogue starts within 3 frames before or after the shot change, start the subtitle on the shot change.

Chaining subtitles

- When there's a gap between two subtitles of less than 12 frames, close this gap and let the subtitles link up (with the usual interval of 2 frames).

Forced Narratives

- Forced narratives are not included in the subtitles for Subcatch, because these already appear on screen. Make sure there is no overlap between the subtitles for Subcatch and the forced narratives.

5. Style

Reply dash (-)

- Reply dash (hyphen), without a space, only for the second speaker.
Did you have text in that series?
-Yes, a few sentences.
- No reply dash before or 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, 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.
- The following subtitle does not have to start with three dots (linking dots) either.
- When a sentence is unfinished, do use three dots.
- When a subtitle starts in the middle of a sentence, also use three dots.
- It is possible to use the ellipsis character, or three dots/periods in a row.

Have you talked to him?
-Yes, but it was unclear to me
whether he was 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.

6. Technical specifications

To be able to synchronise with the film, Subcatch 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
Print master / Original final mix 24fps continuous – interleaved WAV file (LoRo, LtRt, 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)

Files should start FFOA, at time code 00:00:00:00.

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.

7. File naming

Files must have a clear title using the following format:

Subtitles:

Project_title_longplay_language_type_framerate_date

Audio:

project_title_longplay_language_type_channels_samplerate_bitrate_framerate_date

Item	Naming	Example
Project title	project_title	the_fall_guy
Longplay	lp [longplay]	lp
Episode	s[season##]e[episode##]	s01e02
Reel #	r[reel##]	r01
Language	Language code or languagecode-REGION See the list with RFC 5646 tags at registry-page.isdscf.com/languages/ .	nl, en, fr, es nl-BE, en-US, fr-LU, pt-BR
Type	PM (print master) MIX (original final mix) SDH	PM MIX SDH
Channels	1ch (discrete mono) 2ch (interleaved stereo) 6ch	1ch 2ch 6ch
Sample Rate	[##]k [kHz]	48k
Bit Rate	[##]b [bit]	24b
Frame Rate / Time Code Rate	Frame rate + fps (frames per second)	24fps, 25fps
Date	yyyymmdd	20240320
Channel / Track Mapping (bij 5.1)	channel/track designation	.L, .R, .C, .LFE, .Ls, .Rs

Examples stereo print master / original final mix:

the_fall_guy_lp_en_PM_2ch_48k_24b_24fps_20240501.wav

Example subtitles:

the_fall_guy_lp_en_SDH_24fps_20240501.srt

8. Metadata

In order to have your production placed in the Subcatch app, the following metadata must be supplied per film:

- Title
- Film poster (jpeg high resolution)
- Stills (jpeg high resolution)
- Release date
- Synopsis
- Genre
- Length (in minutes)
- SDH supplier
- MPAA rating
- Director
- Cast
- Producer
- Distributor

9. 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 International B.V., please send all materials to info@earcatch.eu.