ADA-Compliant Video and Audio Guidelines

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal antidiscrimination statute designed to ensure equal access to opportunities and benefits for qualified individuals with disabilities. In many state, government, and education institutions, videos must include ADA compliant captions and/or transcript.

Good Practice:

- Captioning improves comprehension for all viewers, especially for those with English as a second language.
- Captioning is a key element of Universal Design for video material, especially for educational material.

“Augmenting an auditory experience with captions more than doubles the retention and comprehension levels.”
(Gary Robson, The Closed Captioning Handbook)

ADA Compliance:

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
  - Communications with individuals with disabilities must be as effective as communications with others.
  - Title III of the ADA requires the provision of auxiliary aids to ensure effective communication including open and closed captioning.
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
  - Educational programs must be accessible to individuals with disabilities.

“The issue is not whether the student with the disability is merely provided access, but the issue is rather the extent to which the communication is actually as effective as that provided to others.”
(Office of Civil Rights (OCR) Docket No. 09-95-2206, January 25, 1996)

Video Captions and Audio Transcripts

1. If audio files are used, a text transcript or other text-based material should be provided.
2. If video files are used, captions or a synchronized text transcript should be provided.
   NOTE: Captions also benefit non-native speakers, users with audio disabled or viewers watching a video with poor quality audio.
3. Video files should be embedded or displayed in a player that can be accessed by a screen reader via keyboard commands. Accessible players include QuickTime, RealPlayer, iTunes, YouTube and properly configured JW Player.
4. Videos that include visual information critical to comprehension should include a description of events or images for visually impaired audiences. For example, a screencast of a software product should name the buttons and commands being used, not just say "click here".
5. Audio or video should not be played by default when entering a page. Instead, the user should be able to click the play button to start the file. This provision prevents audio from interfering with screen reader audio.

NOTE: Transcripts are also beneficial to users who may not be able to access audio on their computers. This is a very frequent situation.
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ADA compiyancy tips

The following are best practices for ADA compliant captions:

• One to three lines of text appear onscreen all at once, stay there for three to seven seconds, and are then replaced by another caption.
• Timed to synchronize with the audio.
• Do not cover up graphics and other essential visual elements of the picture.
• Require the use of upper and lowercase letters.
• Use Arial, Veranda or Helvetica or similar font.
• Use HD resolution if possible (480p or 720p with aspect ratio 16:9).
  ADA compliant font pixel sizes:
  - For 720p HD use pixel size of 24.
  - For 480p HD use pixel size 18.
  - For standard definition video (usually around 800 x 600 with aspect ratio 4:3) use pixel size 20.
  - For resolution 640 x 480 use pixel size 16.
  - For resolution 320 x 240 use pixel size 8.
• Include not more than 32-characters-per-line.

Tips for writing captions

• Captions should be synchronized and appear at approximately the same time as the audio.
• Words should be verbatim when time allows or as close as possible in other situations.
• Captions should be accessible and readily available to those who need or want them.
• Add music or other descriptions inside square brackets such as [music] or [laughter].
• Captions should appear onscreen long enough to be read.
• It is preferable to limit onscreen captions to no more than three lines.
• Speakers should be identified when more than one person is onscreen or when the speaker is not visible.
• Punctuation is used to clarify meaning.
• Spelling is correct throughout the production.
• Write out sound effects when they add to understanding.
• All words are captioned, regardless of language or dialect.
• Use of slang and accent is preserved and identified.
• Use italics when a new word is being defined or a word is heavily emphasized in speech.

Recommended Tools for Captioning

Dragon Naturally Speaking
Speech recognition software such as Dragon Naturally Speaking can automate some transcription, but should be reviewed for errors, especially when low-quality audio or unusual words is/are used.

The Dragon Dictation app for iPhone/iPad can be downloaded from here: http://www.nuancemobilelife.com/apps/

Last Updated: Tuesday, May 20, 2014
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YouTube
For web based video that is copyright compliant (see fair use guidelines), YouTube is the ideal hosting solution as it offers automatic captioning. Accuracy is hit or miss, but can easily be edited. Reference YouTube’s help documents for captions on editing: https://support.google.com/youtube/topic/3014331?hl=en&ref_topic=3014745

Camtasia
Text-to-speech is an option in Camtasia, but is not as accurate as YouTube. You can follow the on screen guide to train the software to recognize your pronunciation. The key is to express each word clearly and at a moderate tempo, and avoid using excessive inflections.

Your best option is to manually add captions and synchronize the text with the audio. Refer to Camtasia’s help guide on captions: http://www.techsmith.com/tutorial-camtasia-captions-prior.html

AMARA
This organization promotes the use of universal subtitles. Their website provides a tool that allows users to type subtitles while watching videos, either user-created content or downloaded files from YouTube. As the text is typed, it can be adjusted to sync with the speaker or audio content. Once the captions are completed, the subtitled video can be uploaded back to YouTube, allowing anyone to use on the web, or to link to through BlackBoard.

For more info, including a tutorial, please see: http://www.amara.org/en/

OSD Captioning Service
The OSD office can provide captioning and/or transcript services on a case-by-case basis. You may contact the OSD office to learn more: http://valenciacollege.edu/osd/default.cfm

Disclaimer
If the video you wish to caption is not yours, it is your responsibility to obtain copyright clearance for any applicable video, by contacting the publisher/author of the media before you attempt to add captions or submit it to OSD office for captioning service.

If you do not own the video the process for captioning must always begin with contacting the publisher of the video. Use the diagram on the next page as a guide before captioning. Alternatively, you can try and find the video or equivalent video in the Academic Video Online, Intelecom and/or Films on Demand video repositories, which are already captioned for you. To learn more about these video libraries, contact the Center for Teaching/Learning Innovation at your campus.

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Question: Do you own the video?

Yes

No

Can a publisher provide a captioned copy of video?

Yes

Convert the video and add captions or subtitles

Captioned Video

No

Is use of video considered “fair use”?

Yes

No

Request permission from the copyright owner to caption video

No