

Delivery requirements for ITV Studios Global Partnerships Limited (“ITV Studios”)

Closed caption / Subtitle (SDH) file specifications



Introduction

ITV follows industry best practices in the creation of closed captions / subtitle (SDH) files. Whilst different regions and territories may support a wider range of techniques and constraints, ITV’s international file creation processes represent the most widely compatible and standardised approach. The section marked ‘[Requirements](#)’ provides the required technical specification for international files. All files must meet this specification.

The section marked ‘[Style Guidance and Preferences](#)’ provides guidance on the house style preferred for ITV. Adhering to them will enable us to offer our viewers a consistent and accessible subtitle experience.

This document uses the term “subtitles” to refer to any verbatim files created to accompany media, and the term encompasses all formats, including, but not limited to, closed caption files.

In some regions, “closed captions” may be used to refer to verbatim files, and “subtitles” may refer specifically to foreign-language translations created to accompany media. ITV Access Services does not work with translated foreign-language subtitle files, only with verbatim English language subtitle files.

ITV Access Services subtitle files are all SDH (Subtitles for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing), so in addition to the transcription of all dialogue, any sound effects not immediately inferred from on-screen action and any music must also be labeled appropriately in the subtitles.

Requirements

File Format

Files must be in one of the following formats:

- DFXP
- SCC

Files must be compliant with EIA-608 closed captioning standards.

Alternative file formats may be negotiated on a discretionary basis, subject to prior agreement with the Access Services department.

Frame rate

All subtitle files need to be created against time-coded proxy media files. This ensures that files are synchronised with the dialogue and run at the correct frame rate. Access Services will not create files without accompanying media.

Letter Case

Dialogue must be written in mixed case fashion. Fully capitalised files are not accepted.

Line length

In closed caption files, line length is limited to 32 fixed-width (monospaced) characters. No line should exceed this width.

Supported Characters

A limited set of characters must be used to ensure compatibility.

Use alphanumeric and English punctuation characters:

A-Z a-z 0-9 !) (, . ? : - ' "

The following characters can also be used:

♪ > < & @ # % + * = / £ \$ ¢ ¥ © ® ¼ ½ ¾ ¾ ™

Do not use accents.

Style Guidance and Preferences

Subtitle line limits

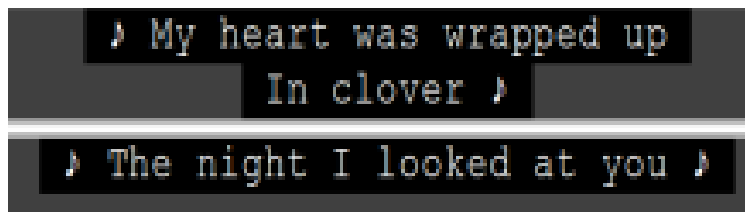
No subtitle will exceed two lines in height.

Speaker Identification

Subtitles are in white text on a solid black background to ensure optimum legibility, with dashes to signify different speakers. Where there is ambiguity for the viewer about who is speaking (for example if a speaker is off-screen or their back is turned to the camera), identifiers must be used.

Indicate song lyrics with ♪

Song lyrics are almost always subtitled - whether they are part of the action or not. Every song subtitle starts and ends with a white music note symbol (♪)

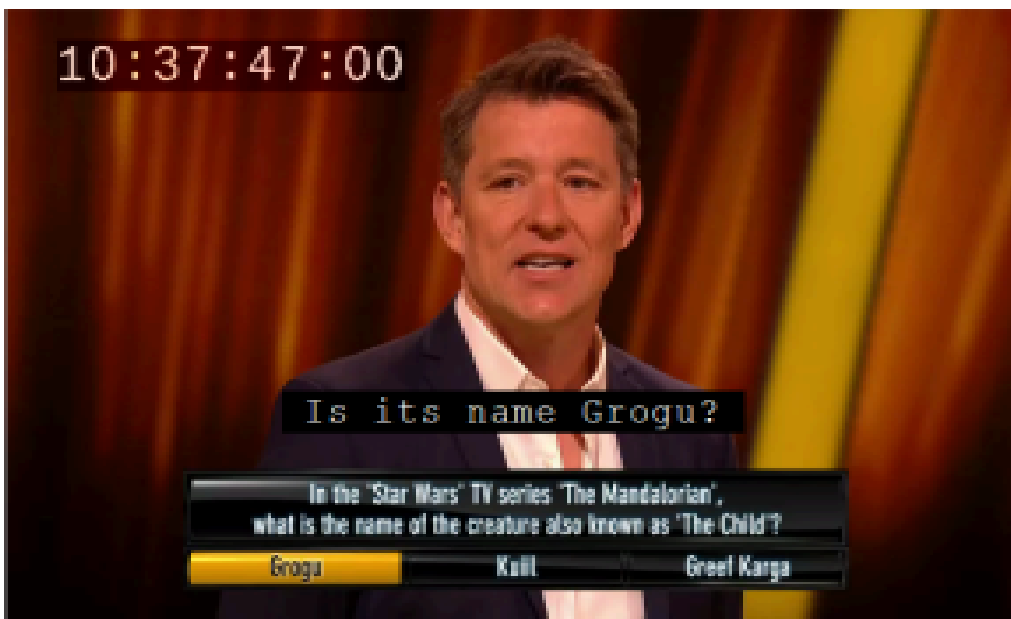


Screen positioning

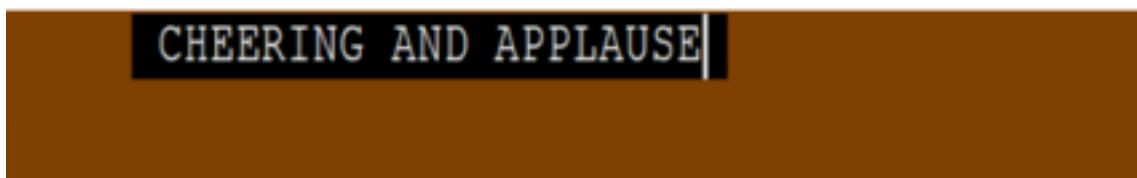
The normally accepted position for subtitles is towards the bottom of the screen. In obeying this convention it is most important to avoid obscuring 'on-screen' captions, any part of a speaker's mouth or any other important activity. Certain special programme types carry a lot of information in the lower part of the screen (e.g. sport) and in such cases top screen positioning will be a more acceptable standard. Subtitle files are normally centre-aligned within a subtitle region that is horizontally centred relative to the video.



Generally, vertical displacement should be used to avoid obscuring important information (such as lower-third captions).

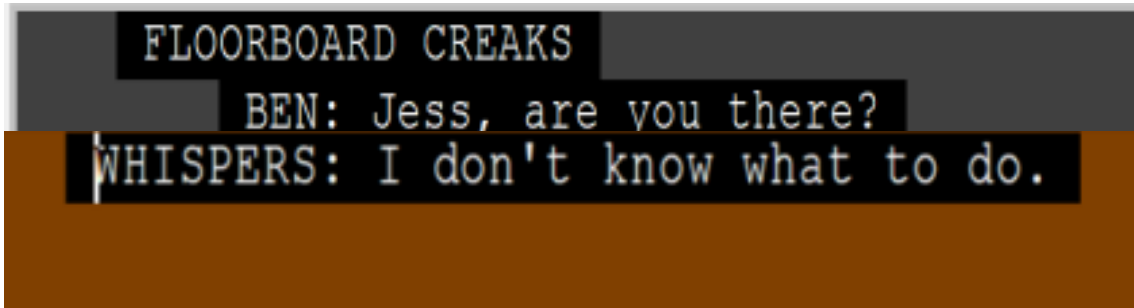


Sound labels, indicating applause, gunfire etc, should be left-justified, all capitalised and white.



Identifiers

Used for dialogue where the speaker is off screen, or difficult to visually identify. Also used to describe non-standard speech. Should be fully capitalised, centred, white and present as part of the subtitle.



Acceptable word rate

20 characters per second (approx 250 words per minute) is the maximum permissible reading speed.
16 characters per second (200 words per minute) for kids' TV.

Timing preferences

Subtitles should be based on the timecode / timeline of the asset.

The minimum duration for a subtitle will be one second.

The maximum duration for a subtitle will be seven seconds.

The minimum gap between two successive subtitles should be one frame. If a longer break where the screen is cleared is required between subtitles, the minimum duration shall be one second.

Shot changes

Try to align subtitle changes with shot changes when the subtitle is due to change within twelve frames of a shot change.

Out times shall precede a shot change by one frame.

Spelling

Subtitles should be supplied in UK or US English, depending on the destination of the file, barring proper nouns as appropriate for the context.

Language

Content will have been checked for compliance prior to subtitling; all speech should be a verbatim representation of the soundtrack, within word rate constraints.

If speech has been anonymised using a bleep, to cover inappropriate language, 'BLEEP' should be presented within the subtitle.

If speech has been dipped to cover inappropriate language, '...' should be presented within the subtitle.

Children's Programming

All of the same preferences apply, but we allow for a more generous reading speed of 16cps.

Prioritise two-line subtitles over one liners to give younger viewers more time to read and process what's on the screen. Try to stick to one speaker per line where possible.