Captioning Key

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Captioning...

the key to understanding for 28,000,000 Americans with a hearing loss.
INTRODUCTION

The Key

Captioning is the key... to opening up a world of information for persons with a hearing loss or literacy needs. There are more than 28 million Americans with a hearing loss. Millions of others are illiterate, learning to read, or use English as a second language.

This manual is a key... for captioning agencies performing Captioned Media Program (CMP) open-captioning. However, much of the information is applicable to closed-captioning. Thus, it will also be useful to video producers/distributors and others who are considering close-captioning their products or learning about captioning. Some background information and rationale is included for the novice.

About the CMP

Sound was introduced to motion pictures in 1927. This made them inaccessible to deaf and hard of hearing persons who had enjoyed equal viewing participation with hearing persons during the silent film era.

Efforts to overcome the problem of inaccessibility did not begin for two decades. In 1947 the first true “captioning” occurred as captions were placed between film frames. Quickly thereafter the Captioned Films for the Deaf (CFD) program was organized and incorporated in Connecticut with an office at the American School for the Deaf.

In 1958 the CFD became federal Public Law 85-905. Although the initial purpose of the CFD was to provide subtitled Hollywood films for deaf people, educators were quick to recognize the potential of captioned films and other visual media as tremendous untapped educational resources. Consequently, the Congress amended the original law to authorize acquisition, captioning, and the distribution of educational films.

In 1984 CFD introduced videocassettes, and CFD became CFV (Captioned Films/Videos). As films were withdrawn from the collection in 1998, the program again changed names and became the Captioned Media Program (CMP). Today, 4,000 captioned videos are available for free loan. Deaf and hard of hearing persons, teachers, parents, and others who work with deaf and hard of hearing people are eligible to borrow these materials.

The National Association of the Deaf (NAD) has a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to select and caption new CMP videos and other media. Approximately 300 new videos are purchased, captioned, and added to the CMP collection each year. The NAD also distributes these materials to consumers nationwide.

Guidelines in this manual have evolved over the 40-year history of the CMP program. However, captioning research and technological developments continually dictate changes and improvements in the captioning process. The CMP staff, with a combined near century of captioning experience, rely heavily on consumer input when incorporating these changes.
A Definition of Captioning

Captioning is the process of converting the audio portion of a film, video, CD-ROM or other production into text which is displayed on a screen or monitor. For deaf and hard of hearing persons, captions not only display words to indicate spoken dialogue or narration, but also include sound effects, speaker identification, music, and other “non-speech” information.

CMP Captioning Philosophy

The CMP captioning philosophy is that all videos should incorporate as much of the original language as possible; words or phrases which may be unfamiliar to the audience should not be replaced with simple synonyms. Extreme rewriting of narration for captions develops problems of “watered-down” language and deleted concepts. Editing should only be done if required to meet the specified presentation rate.

Review by the CMP

First, a ½” VHS time-coded window proof dub and a hard copy or electronic file of the caption script must be sent to the CMP by all agencies performing CMP work. The CMP will notify the captioning agency if changes are to be made, and a second dub (check dub) will be required upon request. Requested changes are penned on script pages which are faxed or mailed to the captioning agency. See Appendix 1 for symbols used for proofreading by the CMP.

Second, captioning agencies are expected to research spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. Video company scripts are not always reliable. All research work should be reported on the “Captioning Research Record” (see Appendix 2) or a CMP-approved substitute. The time code or caption number must be indicated. A copy of the record should be sent to the CMP along with the proof dub and caption script.
Definition:
Types vary according to how the captions appear, how they are accessed, and what information is provided. Methods vary according to when the captions are created and displayed.

Types:
Closed: Closed captions are “hidden” unless they are made visible by a decoder or a TV with a decoder chip. They are usually white letters encased in a black box. (See Figure 1.)

Open: Open captions are similar to subtitles. They are part of the video image and are always visible—no decoding is needed. They are usually white letters with a black rim. (See Figure 2.)

Subtitles: Subtitles are similar to open captions. However, subtitles in a foreign film are for hearing viewers and do not indicate information such as sound effects, speaker identification, and other essential features for deaf and hard of hearing viewers.

Methods:
Off-line: Captions created and added after a video segment has been recorded and before it is aired or played. Examples of programs that utilize off-line captioning are prime-time TV programs, made-for-TV movies, and educational videos. (Live Display captions are created prior to airing but the timing of the display is controlled manually at the airing, often with a teleprompter.)

On-line: Captions created and displayed at the time of program origination, and sometimes referred to as Real-time. Examples of programming that utilizes on-line captioning are sporting events, newscasts, and other events that do not allow time to prepare off-line captions. (CART: Computer-Aided Realtime Translation—is on-line captioning shown on a screen projector at live events such as meetings and school activities.)
Figure 1. Closed-captioning sample

NOW IT IS TIME TO SET UP CAMP AND BEGIN OUR WORK.

Figure 2. Open-captioning sample

The sunset casts a golden glow across the pines in the forest.
**STYLES**

**Definition:**
A style refers to the way captions are presented.

Three common styles of captioning include: pop-on, roll-up, and paint-on. The method of the captioning sometimes dictates the style.

**Pop-on** captions are usually one or two lines of captions that appear onscreen and remain visible for one to several seconds before they disappear. A few frames of videotape are left without captions before the next line(s) of captions “pop-on.”

*The CMP requires pop-on captions in upper- and lowercase letters with descenders. Characters must be Helvetica Medium or a font similar to it. These captions must have good resolution and fit the requested 32 characters to a line. (See Figure 3.)*

**Roll-up** captions are usually verbatim and synchronized. Captions follow double chevrons (“greater than” symbols), and are used to indicate different speaker identifications. Each sentence “rolls up” to about three lines. The top line of the three disappears as a new bottom line is added, allowing the continuous rolling up of new lines of captions.

**Paint-on** captions are very similar to roll-up captions. Individual words are “painted on” from left to right, not popped on with all captions at once, and usually are verbatim.

*Figure 3: CMP caption*

Drivers must be very careful to keep their speed controlled.

**CMP Master Key:**
- Open-captioned format
- Pop-on method
- Upper- and lowercase letters with descenders
- 32 characters per line limit
- Helvetica Medium (or similar)
**Definition:**

*Text* is the appearance of the letters on the screen. Text considerations include: caption placement, spacing, line division, italics, and font.

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**Caption Placement**

1. Caption placement (vertical and horizontal) refers to the location of captions on the television screen. Placement must not interfere with existing visuals/graphics such as maps, illustrations, names of countries, job titles, or names of speakers. Should interference occur, captions should be placed at the top of the screen. If placing captions at the top of the screen also interferes with visuals/graphics, place captions elsewhere on the screen.

2. Captions that have two or more lines must be left-aligned. Examples:

   **Inappropriate**
   
   a. Today’s main event is the Monster Truck Rally.
   
   b. I’m sorry, Norman. I’d never left if I had known.
   
   c. [steamship whistle blows] toooooooot

   **Appropriate**
   
   a. Today’s main event is the Monster Truck Rally.
   
   b. I’m sorry, Norman. I’d never left if I had known.
   
   c. [steamship whistle blows] toooooooot

3. Two lines of captions are preferred. The CMP uses a 1 to 8 line-numbering system. *(See Figure 4.)* Most captions are placed on lines 7 and 8.

   **Acceptable**
   
   I wish to seek your approval.

   **Preferred**
   
   I wish to seek your approval.

4. For media with one offscreen narrator and no preexisting graphics, captions should be left-aligned at center screen on lines 7 and 8.

   Single-line captions should be centered on line 8.
5. Three- or four-line captions are also occasionally acceptable if a one- or two-line caption would interfere with preexisting graphics or be confusing in speaker identification. (See Figure 5.)

Figure 5: Acceptable three- and four-line captions

6. The only exception to number 2 above occurs when both lines of captioned dialogue or narration are exactly the same. In this case, indent the second line two spaces. Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inappropriate</th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where are you?</td>
<td>Where are you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where are you?</td>
<td>Where are you?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, if two caption lines begin with the same word—but are not identical sentences—the second line should not be indented. Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inappropriate</th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>and there is some</td>
<td>and there is some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and then there is none.</td>
<td>and then there is none.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. If essential sound effects are used simultaneously with captioned dialogue, they must be placed at the top of the screen.
8. When people onscreen speak simultaneously, place the captions underneath the speakers. Do not use other speaker identification techniques like hyphens. (See Figure 6.) If this is not possible due to length of caption or interference with onscreen graphics, caption each speaker at different time codes.

9. Captioned dialogue must be placed under the speaker as long it does not interfere with graphics or other preexisting features. (See Figure 7A and 7B.)

**Figure 6: Inappropriate captioning** (It's confusing as to who is speaking.)

![Caption example](image1)

- Yes, we'll need to fill that.
- He has a cavity.

**Figure 7A: Appropriate Captioning** (Clearly shows that the woman is speaking.)

![Caption example](image2)

He has a cavity.

**Figure 7B: Appropriate Captioning** (Clearly shows that the man is speaking.)

![Caption example](image3)

Yes, we'll need to fill that.
10. If a speaker continuously moves from one location onscreen to another, one placement for captions of that speaker's dialogue must be used. Confusion occurs when captions jump around the screen.

11. When a person is thinking, dreaming, or the like, list the description in brackets and place italicized captions above the head. *(See Figure 8.)*

**Figure 8: Caption of a person thinking**

![Caption of a person thinking](image)

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**Spacing**

1. Font size should allow for a thirty-two (32) character caption line.

2. Spaces should not be inserted before ending punctuation, after opening and before closing parentheses and brackets, before and after double hyphens and dashes, or before/between/after the periods of an ellipsis mark. Examples:

   **Inappropriate**  
   a. What did she say ?  
   b. [ gun firing ]  
   c. ( narrator )  
   d. left unsaid -- we just talked.  
   e. I am happy . . . thank you.

   **Appropriate**  
   a. What did she say?  
   b. [gun firing]  
   c. (narrator)  
   d. left unsaid--we just talked.  
   e. I am happy...thank you.

3. A space should be inserted after the beginning music icon (♪) and before the ending music icon(s). Example:

   ♪ There's a bad moon rising ♪
Line Division

1. When a sentence is broken into two or more lines of captioning, it should be broken at a logical point where speech normally pauses, unless it would exceed the 32-characters-per-line requirement.

2. When breaking a sentence into a two-line caption, the following guidelines should be followed:
   a. Do not break a modifier from the word it modifies. Example:

   **Inappropriate**  
   Mark pushed his black truck.  
   
   **Appropriate**  
   Mark pushed his black truck.

   b. Do not break a prepositional phrase. Example:

   **Inappropriate**  
   Mary scampered under the table.  
   
   **Appropriate**  
   Mary scampered under the table.

   c. Do not break a person’s name and do not break titles from a personal name. Example:

   **Inappropriate**  
   1. Bob and Mr. Smythe are at the movies.  
      2. Did you and Doris meet Jake Albright at the mall?

   **Appropriate**  
   1. Bob and Mr. Smythe are at the movies.  
      2. Did you and Doris meet Jake Albright at the mall?

   d. Do not break a line after a conjunction. Example:

   **Inappropriate**  
   In seconds she arrived and he ordered a Pepsi.  
   
   **Appropriate**  
   In seconds she arrived and he ordered a Pepsi.

   e. Do not break an auxiliary verb from the word it modifies.

   **Inappropriate**  
   Mom said I could have gone to the movies.  
   
   **Appropriate**  
   Mom said I could have gone to the movies.

3. Never end a sentence and begin a new sentence on the same line, unless the sentences are very short. Examples:

   **Inappropriate**  
   a. He suspected that his face turned pale. He knew he wouldn’t be able to speak if spoken to. Running toward the void, he halted...

   **Appropriate**  
   a. He suspected that his face turned pale. He knew he wouldn’t be able to speak if spoken to. Running toward the void, he halted...
b. Kate visits a dairy farm.  
She learns how cows are fed,  
milked, and cared for.

b. Kate visits a dairy farm.  
She learns how cows are fed,  
milked, and cared for.

**Italics**

1. Italics should be used to indicate:

   a. A voice-over reading of a poem, book, play, journal, letter, etc. (as this is also quoted material, quotation marks are also used);

   b. When a person is dreaming, thinking, or reminiscing;

   c. When there is background audio that is essential to the plot, such as a PA system, TV, and so forth;

   d. The first time a new word is being defined, but do not italicize the word thereafter;

   e. Offscreen dialogue, narrator (see exception in #6 below), sound effects, or music;

   f. The offscreen narrator if there are multiple speakers onscreen;

   g. Speaker identification if the dialogue is in italics and speaker identification is necessary; and

   h. Foreign words and phrases unless they are in English dictionaries. However, some exceptions apply. For example: "passado" and "punto reverso" are in the dictionary, but not the "hay." For the sake of being consistent, leave all in italics.

    | Inappropriate | Appropriate |
    |---------------|-------------|
    | Ah, the immortal passado! | Ah, the immortal *passado*! |
    | The punto reverso! The hay! | The *punto reverso!* The *hay*! |

2. Italics should also be used when a particular word is heavily emphasized in speech. Example:

   You *must* go!

3. Excessive slanting of italics should be avoided.

4. Underlining should never be used in place of italics.

5. When an entire caption is already in italicized format, use Roman type to set off a word you would normally italicize.

6. If there is only one narrator and no other speakers, whether on- or offscreen, use Roman type with no italics.
7. Do not italicize while translating for a person onscreen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inappropriate</th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[female interpreter]</td>
<td>[female interpreter]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed New Mexico...</td>
<td>I enjoyed New Mexico...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Font**

1. A font, or typeface, is a set of characters at a certain size, weight, and style. Consistency throughout the video is extremely important.

2. The CMP requires that open-captioned characters be Helvetica Medium or a font similar to it.

3. The weight must support a 32-character line.

4. Characters must be sans serif, have a drop or a rim shadow, and be proportionally spaced.

5. The font must include upper- and lowercase letters with descenders that drop below the baseline.

6. Pick a font and spacing technique that does not allow overlap with other characters, ascenders, or descenders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inappropriate</th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My dog Puggy happily</td>
<td>My dog Puggy happily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chewed on the T-bone all day.</td>
<td>chewed on the T-bone all day.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**PRESENTATION RATE**

**Definition:**

Presentation rate is the number of captioned words shown onscreen each minute and is a crucial factor in captioning.

Time is required to read the captions, look at the picture, integrate the captions and the picture, and then internalize the message. When calculating reading rate, count one word as one word, as opposed to basing the calculation on the number of characters. Example: “Jackson disappeared into the woods” would equal five words, and “It was never-ending” would equal four words. Speaker identification and sound effects must be included in the word count when calculating presentation rate.

Rate control is particularly important with educational videos when much of the content presented is unfamiliar to the viewers. More time is necessary to complete the caption-reading process. Research dating back to 1980 has supported captioning presented at 120 words per minute (wpm) as being comprehensible to elementary and secondary students. This rate has been the standard for educational videos in the CMP program and for captioning children's programs at various captioning agencies.

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**Specifications and Guidelines**

1. Many educational, special-interest, and theatrical videos are not scripted to allow the time necessary for the process of reading captions and often have extremely rapid narration/dialogue. Therefore some editing may be necessary.

2. All lower- to middle-level educational videos should be captioned at a presentation rate range of 120-130 wpm. Upper-level educational videos may be captioned slightly above the 120-130 range.

3. Adult special-interest videos require a presentation rate of 150-160 wpm. The presentation rate can be increased if heavy editing radically changes the original meaning, content, or language structure.

4. Children’s movies should be captioned at a rate range of 150-160 wpm. Adult movies should be captioned at a near verbatim rate, but no caption should remain onscreen less than 2 seconds or exceed 225 wpm.

5. Common sense should always prevail in determining presentation rate. Very difficult vocabulary requires more time to read.
**Editing**

1. Editing is performed only when a caption exceeds the specified presentation rate limit. Proper editing should maintain both the original meaning/content and meet presentation rate requirements. Examples:

   a. Original narration:
   
   "Today many colorful and varied tales are told of just how it all started."
   
   (Target rate 120-130 wpm--words per minute)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inappropriate</th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Today many tales are told of how it all started. 116 wpm</td>
<td>Today, colorful and varied tales are told of how it started. 122 wpm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
   
   b. Original narration:
   
   "It's time to stop talking and time to act before they bleed us dry."
   
   (Target rate: 150-160 wpm--words per minute)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inappropriate</th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We must stop talking and act before they bankrupt us. 163 wpm</td>
<td>It's time to act before they bleed us dry. 145 wpm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
   
   c. Original narration:
   
   "All them boys do is get you in trouble...and they're gonna kick you..."
   
   (Target rate: 150-160 wpm--words per minute)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inappropriate</th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(did not caption) Them get you in trouble 148 wpm</td>
<td>They're going they're gonna kick you 152 wpm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. The only times when presentation rate is ignored are when a famous person is quoted, a well-known person is speaking onscreen, poems and other published works are quoted, and/or song lyrics are sung. These must be captioned verbatim.
Language mechanics incorporates the proper use of spelling, grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and other factors deemed necessary for high-quality captioned media. Rules included in this manual are primarily those which are unique to captioning and speech-to-text.

**Spelling and Capitalization**

1. To check spelling and capitalization, the CMP uses several up-to-date and well-known dictionaries including the Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, American Heritage Dictionary (3rd. Ed.), and others. Encyclopedias used for proper nouns include Encyclopædia Britannica and Encarta.

2. Do not use British spellings.

3. Written English rules on capitalization are difficult. First of all, there are a seemingly endless number of rules to master. Second, the authorities themselves don't agree on the rules. Try to remember the basic purposes of capitalization: to load special significance into words and to give importance, emphasis, and distinction to words.

4. Captioning agencies are expected to:
   a. Use a reputed dictionary and choose the most common or preferred variant.
   b. Be consistent in the spelling of words throughout the video. This includes words that can be spelled either as one or two words or in hyphenated form.
   c. Capitalize proper names for speaker identification. All other speaker identification should be lowercased. Examples:

   **Inappropriate**
   1. (Male Nurse)
   2. (bobby)

   **Appropriate**
   1. (male nurse)
   2. (Bobby)

   d. Lowercase sound effects, including both description and onomatopoeia except when a proper name is part of the description. Examples:

   **Inappropriate**
   1. [Machine Gun Firing]
   2. [Frog croaking]
   3. [Plinky Squealing]

   **Appropriate**
   1. [machine gun firing]
   2. [frog croaking]
   3. [Plinky squealing]
Research

When performing CMP captioning work, captioning agencies are expected to extensively research spelling, capitalization, and grammar. All research work should be recorded on the “Captioning Research Record” (see Appendix 2).

Grammar

1. Unless contractions (shouldn’t, isn’t, etc.) are spoken, avoid using them in captions.
2. Do not use abbreviations unless spoken that way. Example:

   **Inappropriate**
   Bring catsup, mustard, relish, etc.

   **Appropriate**
   Bring catsup, mustard, relish, et cetera.

Punctuation

1. For other language mechanic features, the CMP uses The Gregg Reference Manual, The Chicago Manual of Style, and others.
2. As a general rule, written English language depends largely on word order to make the relationships between words clear. When word order alone is not sufficient to establish these relationships, the CMP typically resorts to punctuation.

   It is not easy to determine the appropriate punctuation for written language. Spoken language sometimes appears improperly constructed when put into written form and can be even more difficult to punctuate.

   Acceptable and understandable speech may consist of broken sentences, incomplete sentences, run-on sentences, and other constructions normally considered not acceptable when originated as written language. Transcription of these speech constructions into text sometimes requires use of punctuation that is unique to the captioning process.

3. Emotion/tone should be conveyed by standard punctuation marks, with multiple exclamation points used for strong emotion. Examples:

   **Inappropriate**
   a. aaaauuuggghhh.
   b. Sit down right now.

   **Appropriate**
   a. aaaauuuggghhh!!!
   b. Sit down right now!
4. Special emphasis given to nonessential information should be conveyed by double hyphens or a single long dash. Examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inappropriate</th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. So French officials, not Spanish, were back</td>
<td>a. So French officials-- not Spanish--were back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Then he is off on the next leg of his journey, 325 miles to Flagstaff, Arizona, eating sandwiches.</td>
<td>b. Then he is off on the next leg of his journey--325 miles to Flagstaff, Arizona-- eating sandwiches.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Do not emphasize a word using all capital letters, unless this indicates screaming.

6. When a speaker stutters, caption what is said:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inappropriate</th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>book</td>
<td>b-b-b-ook</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Use ellipses marks--not commas or other punctuation--when there is a significant pause within a caption. Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inappropriate</th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Look at that sunset isn’t it beautiful?</td>
<td>Look at that sunset... isn’t it beautiful?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do not use ellipses marks to indicate that the sentence continues into the second caption.

Use ellipses marks to lead into or out of audio relating to an onscreen graphic. (See Figure 9.)

Figure 9: Use of ellipses marks

---

Scene 1

![Image of a teacher with a blackboard and text: In school we have rules...]

Scene 2

1. Be in your seat when the bell rings.
2. No chewing gum.
3. Homework must be completed on time.
Quotation Marks

1. Double quotation marks must have appropriate curvature direction or be vertically aligned:

“” or “”

2. Quotation marks are used to distinguish titles of books, periodicals, plays, films, videos, short stories, and other titles of complete works. Also, quotation marks are used to distinguish names of individual ships, trains, airplanes, and spacecrafts.

3. Use quotation marks for onscreen readings from a poem, book, play, journal, or letter. However, use quotation marks and italics for offscreen readings or voice-overs.

4. Beginning quotation marks should be used for each caption of quoted material except for the last caption. The last caption should have only ending quotation marks. Example from a reading of a journal:

**Inappropriate**

“Mother knelt down and began thoughtfully fitting”

“the ragged edges of paper together.”

“The process was watched with spellbound interest.”

**Appropriate**

"Mother knelt down and began thoughtfully fitting"

“the ragged edges of paper together.”

The process was watched with spellbound interest.”
**Special Considerations**

**Definition:**
Other significant features should be incorporated into captioning. **Special considerations** include: sound effects, speaker identification, synchronization, music, foreign language/dialect/slang, numbers, and others.

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### Sound Effects

1. Sound effects necessary to the understanding and/or enjoyment of the video should be captioned.
   
   a. A description of sound effects, in brackets, should include the source of the sound and a representation of it. Avoid use of discriminatory terms.  

   **Figure 10: Use of description only**

   ![Audience Cheering](image1)

   [audience cheering]

   ![Wolf Growling](image2)

   grrrrrrrrrrr

   b. Description can be eliminated if you can clearly see the source of the sound onscreen. For example, if a wolf is shown in the process of growling, only onomatopoeia is necessary.  

   **Figure 11: Use of onomatopoeia only**

   ![Wolf Growling](image3)
c. If the presentation rate permits, also include an imitation or onomatopoeia of the sound. A study by Gallaudet University showed that “A combination of description and onomatopoeia was the preference of more consumers (56%) than was description alone (31%) or onomatopoeia alone (13%).” (See Figure 12.)

**Figure 12: Description and onomatopoeia**

2. Offscreen sound effects should be italicized. (See example below.)

3. Place the description of the sound effect as close as possible to the sound source.

4. A description must be enclosed in brackets.

5. Both sound effect and onomatopoeia must be lowercased.

6. If description is used for offscreen sound effects, it is not necessary to repeat the source of the sound if it is making the same sound a few captions later. Examples:

   **First caption**  
   [pig squealing]  

   **Later caption**  
   [squealing]
7. The description should be on the first line of the sound effect caption, separate from the onomatopoeia. Example:

**Inappropriate** | **Appropriate**
---|---
a. [bell ringing] bbrriiinnngg!! | a. [bell ringing] bbrriiinnngg!!

8. Use punctuation to indicate speed or pace of sound. Examples:

**Slow**
(clock chiming) dong...dong...dong

**Rapid**
[gun firing] bang, bang, bang

9. A sound represented by a repeated word is not hyphenated. A sound represented by two different words is hyphenated. Examples:

**Repeated words** | **Two different words**
---|---
[doorbell ringing] ding, ding | [doorbell ringing] ding-dong

10. When describing a sustained sound, use the present participle form of the verb. When describing an abrupt sound, use the third person verb form. Examples:

**Sustained sound** | **Abrupt sound**
---|---
a. [dog barking] woof, woof...woof | a. [gun cocks] click, click
b. [papers crinkling] | b. [papers crinkle]

11. Caption background sound effects only when they're essential to the plot.

12. Caption audience response only if the speaker is interacting with them or when it is essential to a better understanding of the plot. Example:

**Inappropriate** | **Appropriate**
---|---
(John) So, you'd like that, huh!? | (John) So, you'd like that, huh!!
[audience cheering]

13. When possible, use concrete rather than abstract terms to describe sounds. Examples:

**Abstract** | **Concrete**
---|---
a. [horse running] | a. [horse galloping]
b. [bird singing] | b. [robin singing]
14. Never use the past tense when describing sounds. Captions should be synchronized with the sound and are therefore in the present tense.

Intonation/ Play on Words/ No Audio

1. If the speaker is not visible onscreen or visual clues as to emotional state are not shown, indicate the speaker's emotion. Example:

   Inappropriate                       Appropriate
   Well, whatever.                    [angrily]
   Well, whatever.                   

2. When a person is whispering, caption as:

   [whispering]
   Okay, you go first.

3. When feasible, describe puns:

   Why do they call her Ouisy? ["Wheezy"]

4. When people are seen talking but there is no audio, caption as:

   [no audio]

Speaker Identification

1. When possible, use caption placement to identify an onscreen speaker by placing the caption under the speaker.

2. a. If offscreen speakers are speaking simultaneously, appropriate speaker identification must be added.

   b. When a speaker cannot be identified by placement and his/her name is known, the speaker's name should be in parentheses. Also, the speaker’s name needs to be on a line of its own, separate from the captions. Examples:

      Inappropriate                       Inappropriate                       Appropriate
      [President Bush]                   President Bush:                      (President Bush)
      I'm reviewing the bill.            I'm reviewing the bill.              I'm reviewing the bill.

   c. When a speaker cannot be identified by placement and his/her name is unknown, identify the speaker using the same information a hearing viewer has: female #1, male narrator, etc. Avoid use of discriminatory terms. If offscreen, place captions to
the far right or left, as close as possible onscreen to the offscreen speaker. Remember to italicize.

3. Caption the most commonly used character name for speaker identification, depending on how that character is introduced. Should “Smith” be spoken more often than “Bobby,” use (Smith). If “Bobby” is used more often, caption as (Bobby).

4. If there is one narrator, identify as (male/female narrator) at the beginning of the video. It is not necessary to identify gender for each caption.

5. When an actor is portraying a well-known person—for example, Michelangelo—caption as: (as Michelangelo).

### Synchronization

1. Keep the captions as closely synchronized to the original audio as possible.

2. Borrowing 15 frames before and after the audio occurs is hardly noticeable to the viewer. This “borrowing” technique can be used occasionally when presentation rate is a factor.

3. Do not simultaneously caption different speakers if they are not speaking at the same time.

### Music

1. When captioning music, use descriptions that indicate the mood. Be as objective as possible. Avoid subjective words such as delightful, beautiful, or melodic.

2. If music is vocal, caption the lyrics verbatim. The lyrics should be introduced with the name of the vocalist/vocal group and the title (in brackets), if known/significant, and if the presentation rate permits.

   [The Beatles singing “Yesterday”]
   ♪ Yesterday...
   all my troubles ♪

3. a. Caption lyrics with music icons (♪).

   b. Use one music icon at the beginning and end of each caption within a song, but use two music icons at the end of the last line of a song.

   c. Add a space after the beginning music icon and a space before the ending music icon(s).

4. A description (in brackets) should be used for instrumental/background music or when verbatim captioning would exceed the presentation rate. If known, the description should include the performer/composer and the title. Examples:

   a. [Louis Armstrong plays “Hello Dolly”]
b. [piano playing the national anthem]
c. [romantic orchestral music]

5. Beware of misplaced modifiers in your descriptions. Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inappropriate</th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[frantic piano playing]</td>
<td>[frantic piano music]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[piano playing frantic music]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. For background music, place a music icon in the upper right corner of the screen.

### Foreign Language/ Dialect/ Slang/ Phonetics

1. If possible, caption the actual foreign words. If it is not possible to caption the words, use a description; i.e., [speaking French]. Never translate into English.

2. If possible, use accent marks, umlauts, and other indicators.

3. Indicate regional accent at the beginning of the first caption. Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inappropriate</th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If y'all want me to.</td>
<td>[Southern accent]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If y'all want me to.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Keep the flavor of dialect. Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inappropriate</th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I just sort of held my knees</td>
<td>I just sort of held me knees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in water, and pulled him</td>
<td>in water, and pulled him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>across my knees</td>
<td>across me knees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and examined him</td>
<td>and examined him</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Keep the flavor of the speaker's language when necessary to portray a character's personality. This includes captioning profanity and slang. Examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inappropriate</th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. I am not going anywhere.</td>
<td>a. I ain't going nowhere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. [cursing]</td>
<td>b. Damn!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
c. I'm going to get you.  
d. Let's call them.  
e. She's waiting.

6. When listening to a word phonetically, caption appropriately rather than spelling it out phonetically.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inappropriate</th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. N-double-A-C-P</td>
<td>a. NAACP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. www dot cfv dot org</td>
<td>b. <a href="http://www.cfv.org">www.cfv.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Numbers**

1. **Spelling out:**

   a. Unless otherwise specified below, spell out all numbers from one to ten, but use numerals for all numbers over ten.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inappropriate</th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The fifty-four videos need to be shelved.</td>
<td>1. The 54 videos need to be shelved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The timer shows twenty-three minutes left.</td>
<td>2. The timer shows 23 minutes left.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. He's at the fifty...sixty... and scores!</td>
<td>3. He's at the 50...60... and scores!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. Spell out any number that begins a sentence, as well as any related numbers:

   Two hundred tourists and eleven guides entered.

c. Spell out casual, nonemphatic numbers:

   He gave me hundreds of reasons.

d. Numerals with four digits can either have a comma or not. Be consistent throughout the video. For numerals having over five digits, a comma is necessary. Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inappropriate</th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
e. Use numerals in a listing of numbers if one or more is above ten and these occur in one caption or one sentence:

Steven has 21 books,
11 oranges, and 3 cats.

f. Use numerals when referring to technical and athletic terms:

He scored 3 goals
in today's game!

g. Do not use the "#" symbol, except for speaker identification such as (female #1).

h. When indicating sequence, capitalize the noun and use numerals. Exceptions are the indication of line, note, page, paragraph, size, step, or verse. Examples:

| Building 2  | page 31 |
| Channel 5   | size 12 |
| Chapter III | step 3  |
| Room 438    | paragraph 2 |

2. Dates:

a. Use the numeral plus the lowercase "th," "st," or "nd" when a day of the month is mentioned by itself (no month is referred to).

Bob went fishing
on the 9th.

b. When the month and day are spoken (no year), use the numeral plus the lowercase "th," "st," or "nd" if the ending is spoken.

My birthday is
on June 17th.   Original narration: "seventeenth."

c. Use the numeral alone if the ending is not spoken.

I will meet you
on May 9.       Original narration: "nine."

d. When the month, day, and year are spoken, use the numeral alone for the day, even if an ending (th, st, or nd) is spoken.

Paul will marry
on July 6, 1996. Original narration: "sixth."

3. Periods:

a. A decade should be captioned as "the 1980s" (not "the 1980's") and "the '50s" (not "the 50's").
b. If a decade or century is in noun form, do not use hyphens:

This vase is from the 17th century.

c. If in adjective form, use a hyphen:

This 19th-century painting was done by Van Gogh.

4. Fractions:

a. Either spell out or use numerals for fractions, keeping this rule consistent throughout the video. If using numerals, insert a space between a whole number and its fraction:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numeral</th>
<th>Spelled out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you plan to eat 1 1/2 of the pizzas?</td>
<td>Do you plan to eat one and one-half pizzas?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. Do not mix numerals and spelled-out words within the same sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inappropriate</th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malika is 13 and a half years old.</td>
<td>Malika is 13 1/2 years old.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c. If a fraction is used with “million,” “billion,” “trillion,” etc., spell out the fraction:

The population was over one-half million.

d. Fractions expressed in figures should not be followed by endings such as sts, ds, nds, or ths.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inappropriate</th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/10ths</td>
<td>3/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/32nd</td>
<td>1/32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Percent:

Use numerals and the percent sign to indicate all percentages except at the beginning of a new sentence. Examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle of sentence</th>
<th>Beginning of sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Only 6% of the votes were counted.</td>
<td>a. Fifty-one percent of the people voted “yes.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. The 18.9% figure was considered incorrect.</td>
<td>b. Thirty-three percent was taken off the final markdown.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. **Dollar amounts:**

   a. Use the numeral plus “cents” or “¢” for amounts under one dollar.

      I need 15 cents.
      
      I owe you 35¢.

   b. Use the dollar sign plus the numeral for dollar amounts under one million. For even dollar amounts of one million and greater, spell out “million,” “billion,” etc.

      John brought only $11.
      
      Bob brought $6.12.
      
      The budget of $13,000 will be sufficient.
      
      Taxes will be reduced by a total of $13 million.
      
      He owes $13,656,000.

   c. Use the dollar sign and full numerals when captioning a range of currency over ten dollars.

      Alice expected a raise of $6,000 to $7,000.

   d. Use the word “dollar” only once for a range up to ten.

      I hoped to find three to four dollars.

7. **Time:**

   a. Indicate time of day with numerals only:

      I awoke at 5:17.
      
      If you wish to attend, you must arrive by 6:25 P.M.
      
      We were expected to report no later than 1400 hours.
      
      I awoke at 4 o’clock.
      
      I awoke at 4 in the morning.
b. Always use numerals with a.m. or p.m. Double zeros are not necessary to indicate minutes of the hour when a whole number is used with a.m. or p.m.:

She leaves at 3:20 p.m. for the airport.

Our hours are from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

8. Measurement:

a. Do not use symbols or abbreviations for units of measurement.

b. Spell out “inches,” “feet,” “yards,” “miles,” “ounces,” “pounds,” “tablespoons,” etc. However, if spoken in shortened form, symbols should be used. For example, “I’m five eight.” should be captioned as:

I’m 5’8”.

c. For whole numbers, use numerals. For example, caption “3 cups of sugar” instead of “three cups of sugar.”

FUNDING CREDITS

At the end of each CMP video, the following information should be added in caption form: “Funding for purchase and captioning of this video was provided by the U. S. Department of Education: PH: 1-800-USA-LEARN (V).” No other credits or information should be added. Use the following line break:

Funding for purchase and captioning of this video was provided by the U. S. Department of Education:

PH: 1-800-USA-LEARN (V).
BECOMING AN APPROVED CAPTIONING SERVICE VENDOR

Anyone interested in acting as a CMP captioning service vendor should contact the CMP or the U.S. Department of Education (ED). One of the NAD cooperative agreement tasks is to assist the ED in the evaluation of video captioning.

If approved vendors use the ED's name in their advertisements, the language must be as follows:

"(Name of Agency) is an approved captioning service vendor for the Captioned Media Program, Office of Special Education Programs, U. S. Department of Education. This does not infer an endorsement by the Department of Education."

The CMP has numerous captioning and accessibility information materials regarding the CMP program, captioning, and other topics. Contact us at:

Captioned Media Program
National Association of the Deaf
1447 E. Main St.
Spartanburg, SC 29307
(800) 237-6213 V
(800) 237-6819 TTY
(800) 538-5636 FAX
info@cfv.org EMAIL
www.cfv.org WEB

The ED also welcomes questions and comments and may be contacted at: 1-800-USA-LEARN (V).
Appendices
Appendix 1

Proofreading Marks

- **Capitalize**
- **Close up**
- **Delete or Change**
- **Delete and Close up**
- **Insert**
- **Change to italics**
- **Lowercase**
- **Change to Roman type**
- **Space**
- **Transpose**
- **Note change(s) that need to be made**
- **Make 2 lines**
- **Insert new time code**
- **Exceeds safety zone**
- **Line break**
- **Move to the specified Line number**
- **Move two spaces to the right or tab over**

Examples:

- **John doe**
- **One word**
- **Take out**
- **The kitten was**
- **Close**
- **Insert here or Mr Smith**
- **www.cfv.org**
- **John Doe**
- **The cat was not**
- **Insert a space**
- **Since 1870,**
- **I know.**
## CAPTIONING RESEARCH RECORD

**CAPTIONED MEDIA PROGRAM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAPTION NO.</th>
<th>ITEM RESEARCHED</th>
<th>COMMENT/NATURE OF RESEARCH</th>
<th>CORRECTION</th>
<th>SOURCE</th>
<th>VOLUME / PAGE NO.; WWW ADDRESS; MULTIMEDIA TYPE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02:46:01</td>
<td>Joe DeMaggio</td>
<td>sp.</td>
<td>DiMaggio</td>
<td>WBD</td>
<td>p. 261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06:11:29</td>
<td>war ships</td>
<td>1 or 2 words</td>
<td>warship</td>
<td>RHD</td>
<td>CD-ROM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09:25:19</td>
<td>best defended</td>
<td>base</td>
<td>hyphen</td>
<td>best-defended</td>
<td>GR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25:12:23</td>
<td>two week's leave</td>
<td>possessive</td>
<td>weeks’</td>
<td>GR</td>
<td>¶ 627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32:58:23</td>
<td>kerandum</td>
<td>sp.</td>
<td>kerdumf</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>p. 640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35:55:05</td>
<td>Western Hemisphere</td>
<td>cap.</td>
<td>ok</td>
<td>RHD</td>
<td>CD-ROM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38:03:17</td>
<td>bluetongue</td>
<td>1 or 2 words</td>
<td>ok</td>
<td>RHD</td>
<td>p. 150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40:00:14</td>
<td>boat maker</td>
<td>1 or 2 words</td>
<td>assumed ok</td>
<td>not in any 3 dictionaries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41:19:03</td>
<td>Terry Wecht (narrator)</td>
<td>sp.</td>
<td>assumed ok</td>
<td>not in ending credits but in co. script</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42:45:29</td>
<td>clevis</td>
<td>sp.</td>
<td>ok</td>
<td>RHD</td>
<td>CD-ROM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43:30:15</td>
<td>Hyannisport</td>
<td>sp.</td>
<td>Hyannis Port</td>
<td>www</td>
<td><a href="http://hometownamerican.com">http://hometownamerican.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51:05:00</td>
<td>crash of 1929</td>
<td>cap.</td>
<td>Crash of 1929</td>
<td>EB</td>
<td>CD-ROM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52:25:13</td>
<td>Gloire</td>
<td>sp. &amp; q. marks</td>
<td>sp. --ok q. marks --yes</td>
<td>Encarta '98 &amp; Captioning Key</td>
<td>CD-ROM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use the following abbreviations for standard source (provide abbreviations for other sources you use):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OTHER SOURCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RHD           = Random House Dictionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GR            = Gregg Reference Manual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMS           = Chicago Manual of Style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHD           = American Heritage Dictionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EB            = Encyclopaedia Britannica</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. WBD = Webster’s Biographical Dictionary
2. SD = Slang Dictionary
3. 
4. 
5. 

Appendix 2