



HOW TO SOURCE, EDIT AND SCREEN SUBTITLE FILES

NB This is a guide to using the most widely-accessible, *free* resources online to produce quality descriptive subtitles in the interest of equal access for all. For these purposes, it's assumed that arguments around the legality of some resources are better resolved elsewhere.

SESSION ONE: PRINCIPLES OF SUBTITLING

0. Terminology

- **Subtitles** v Descriptive Subtitles / Captions / **SDH**
- File types (.srt, .sub, .stl, .vtt, .XML, .dfxp, ttml2)
- Frame rates
- Shotchanges

1. Recommended software (all free with no restrictions)

- [MakeMKV](#) (Mac and PC)
- [Subtitle Edit](#) (PC only, or Mac with PC emulator)
- TextEdit (Mac) or Notepad (PC)
- [Media Info](#) (Mac and PC)
- [VLC](#) (Mac and PC)
- [Handbrake](#) (Mac and PC)
- [Shazam](#) (iOS, Android, Mac Desktop)
- [Kapwing](#) (Mac and PC, desktop linked to app)
- [Qstit](#) (Mac and PC)

2. Useful websites

- [Opensubtitles.org](#) | [Subscene.com](#) | [Subtitledb.org](#) | [Subdl.com](#)
- [Savesubs.com](#)
- [Online subtitle converter](#)
- [Subtitletools.com](#)
- [Live WebVTT validator](#)

3. Descriptive Subtitles / SDH / Captions

Basic principles:

1. Textual accuracy (spelling, grammar)
2. Research (names, places, vernacular, specialised terminology)



3. Timing/sync
4. Presentation

SDH specific:

1. Equality of experience
2. Verbatim vs readability / reading speed
3. Dramatic relevance
4. Style

4. Bad subtitles vs Good subtitles

SESSION TWO: PRACTICAL SUBTITLING

5. Sourcing Subtitles

1. From the distributor/production
2. From the disc (OCR)
3. Online subtitle libraries
4. Auto-generating

6. Subtitling Workflow

1. Source/prepare media
2. First pass
3. Research
4. Second pass
5. Proofing

7. Editing Subtitles

- Using Subtitle Edit
- Using YouTube Studio / Facebook
- Using text-editing software

8. Screening Subtitles

Considerations include:

1. Burnt-in / “open” or sidecar / “closed”
2. Style (typeface, size, outline, shadow)



3. Placement
4. Spot-check for sync
5. Be aware of letterbox masking
6. Live-cueing subtitles / Surtitles

9. Online screening with Subtitles

1. Subtitles/SDH/CC provision on streaming platforms
2. Watch-party options

10. Advertising / communication / outreach

If you plan to screen with descriptive subtitles/SDH, use the “CC” logo prominently in any print or online advertising and relevant literature. Wherever possible, note the SDH in listings and event pages.

11. Meetings/Q&As

- Zoom
- Google Hangouts/Meet
- Microsoft Team
- Jitsu

12. Social Media

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- TikTok

13. Professional subtitling

- Matchbox Cinesub
- Collective Text
- Stagetext
- Rev
- etc.

14. Further reading

- [Netflix Style Guide](#)



- [Independent Cinema Office subtitling resources](#)
- [Cinema For All hearing loss resources](#)
- [#SubtitledCinema campaign](#)
- [Inclusive Cinema recommended subtitling services](#)
- [Inclusive Cinema tips for running a d/Deaf film club for people of colour](#)

- [Premiere Pro: Captioning](#)
- [Final Cut Pro: Creating Captions](#)

- [Handbrake: Subtitles](#)

- [YouTube Help: Add Your Own Subtitles](#)
- [Vimeo: Captions and Subtitles](#)

- [Facebook Help Centre: Add Captions](#)
- [Twitter: Subtitles](#)

- [Kapwing: How to add subtitles to an Instagram Video](#)
- [How to create subtitles for your TikTok videos](#)

- [Stagetext digital resources](#)
- [Wikipedia comparison of subtitle editors](#)

- [“Say what? Why film translators are in a war of words over subtitles” \(Anne Billson, The Guardian\)](#)