

Code of Good Subtitling Practice

Subtitle spotting and translation:

- Subtitlers must always work with a copy of the production and, if possible, a dialogue list and glossary of atypical words and special references.
- It is the subtitler's job to spot the production and translate and write the subtitles in the (foreign) language required.
- Translation quality must be high with due consideration of all idiomatic and cultural nuances.
- Simple syntactic units should be used.
- When it is necessary to condense dialogue, the text must be coherent.
- Subtitle text must be distributed from line to line and page to page in sense blocks and/or grammatical units.
- Ideally, each subtitle should be syntactically self-contained.
- The language register must be appropriate and correspond to locution.
- The language should be grammatically correct since subtitles serve as a model for literacy.
- All important written information in the images (signs, notices, etc.) should be translated and incorporated wherever possible.
- Given the fact that many TV viewers are hearing-impaired, "superfluous" information, such as names, off-screen interjections, etc., should also be subtitled.
- Songs must be subtitled where relevant.
- Obvious repetition of names and common comprehensible phrases need not always be subtitled.
- The in and out times of subtitles must follow the speech rhythm of the dialogue, taking cuts and sound bridges into consideration.
- Language distribution within and over subtitles must consider cuts and sound bridges; the subtitles must underline surprise or suspense and in no way undermine it.
- The duration of all subtitles within a production must adhere to a regular viewer reading rhythm.
- Spotting must reflect the rhythm of the film.
- No subtitle should appear for less than one second or, with the exception of songs, stay on the screen for longer than seven seconds.
- A minimum of four frames should be left between subtitles to allow the viewer's eye to register the appearance of a new subtitle.
- The number of lines in any subtitle must be limited to two.
- Wherever two lines of unequal length are used, the upper line should preferably be shorter to keep as much of the image as free as possible and in left-justified subtitles in order to reduce unnecessary eye movement.

- There must be a close correlation between film dialogue and subtitle content; source language and target language should be synchronized as far as possible.
- There must be a close correlation between film dialogue and the presence of subtitles.
- Each production should be edited by a reviser/editor.
- The (main) subtitler should be acknowledged at the end of the film or, if the credits are at the beginning, then close to the credit for the script writer.
- The year of subtitle production and the copyright for the version should be displayed at the end of the film.