



Guidelines for Captioning Audio-Visual Media

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Context:

One of the unique and valuable aspects of RIT is that we are home to the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), the world's first and largest technological college for students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing. These guidelines for captioning media are established to ensure that RIT creates an educational environment that is accessible to all learners and reflects the importance of NTID to the university as a whole.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, reaffirmed by the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), was created to protect the rights of people with disabilities. Section 504 of the Act specifically applies to colleges and universities. As well as requiring reasonable accommodations such as alternative testing methods and extended testing time, these Acts have a direct impact on the media used for courses.

Resources are available to all faculty members to help them meet each portion of the Guidance. These resources are described in the section following the Guidance.

Guidance:

- All media used in face-to-face, blended, and online courses will be transcribed and captioned. This includes videos with audio or sign language only content.
- Uncaptioned audio-visual materials may not be provided as course content.
- Media produced, streamed, or otherwise provided as part of a student(s) presentation, for campus and online courses, will be transcribed and captioned *if* a graded assignment or test, based on the student (s) presentation, is a part of the course requirements.
- Captioned versions of media will be made available for students to review if the material is to be included in exams well in advance of the exam. Faculty may provide a link to the captioned media in myCourses or put it on reserve in the library.
- Conference calls (such as those recorded through VOIP, e.g. Skype), teleconferences (such as those conducted using Adobe Connect), and audio recordings that are a part of a course need to be made accessible with captioning. Faculty must work with [Access Services](#) to coordinate real-time captioning when a student request is made.
- Captions provided by YouTube are not always reliable. Therefore, faculty should review captioning for YouTube content before showing it in class. If the YouTube captioning is not accurate, it should be captioned by Teaching and Learning Services (TLS).
- Captioned versions of media must be purchased when available.
- All newly purchased uncaptioned media will be captioned on a priority basis by TLS.

- All media equipment and computers used in classrooms must be capable of displaying captions. Labels with clear instructions for using closed captions will be on all equipment.

Faculty Resources for Delivering Accessible Course Media:

It is vital that faculty select or provide accessible media for their courses. Since you may not know whether you have a student who requires accommodations enrolled in your class until the end of the Drop/Add period, you should select and develop accessible materials when you design your course. It is advisable to allow two weeks of lead time for media captioning. If you need to secure permission from the copyright holder, the process will take longer. Refer to the [Fair Use Checklist](#) and/or contact the [RIT Office of Legal Affairs](#) for guidance on legal use of media in the classroom.

The process for adding captioning to media you will use in a course depends on the media itself:

- **A video you created or for which you are the copyright holder***
 - Complete a [captioning request form](#) .
 - You must provide the media to TLS and may need to grant permission for the media to be duplicated.

- **A video you own but for which you do not hold the copyright***
 - If the media is a non-dramatic, literary work, complete a [captioning request form](#). You do not need to secure permission for use from the copyright holder for these types of works.
 - If you believe that permission is not required because the use is qualified as “fair use” under the Copyright Act, complete the [captioning request form](#).
 - In all other cases, contact the copyright holder to get permission to caption the media. Then, complete a [captioning request form](#) .You must provide the media to the staff in TLS.

- **You-Tube or other internet-based video***
 - If you believe that permission for use is not required because the use is qualified as “fair use” under the Copyright Act, complete a [captioning request form](#).
 - Otherwise, contact the copyright holder to get permission to caption the media. Then, complete a [captioning request form](#).

- **“Live” audio-visual content in your course, such as a conference call**
 - Advise the student requiring accommodation to contact [NTID Access Services](#) to arrange for “real-time” captioning.

Please provide the [RIT Student Guidelines for Captioning Audio Visual Media](#) in your classes that require student presentations.

Purchasing new media:

- College representatives or the librarian assigned to your college will purchase the open and/or closed captioned version of new instructional media and other audio-visual materials. If a particular product is not available with captioning, the

purchaser will request permission from the copyright owner to add captions to the video. **Please note that permission must be obtained prior to purchase, as a condition of purchase.** In the event that permission is denied, a suitable captioned alternative will be sought.

- If the new media will become a part of the university collection, housed in The Wallace Center (TWC), the staff in TWC will ensure the media has open/closed captioning. For more information regarding purchased media, please contact the librarian assigned to your department.

* This also applies to media used in student presentations, which are included in graded assignments or tests

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: Why are faculty required to show only captioned media in class?

A: RIT is committed to creating an educational environment that is accessible to all learners. This commitment is a reflection of our core values and is guided by federal law:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), signed into law in 1990, protects persons with disabilities from discrimination through barriers to communication. Communications with individuals with disabilities must be as effective as communications with others. The use of captioned media breaks down these barriers and equalizes communication access.

You may find it interesting to note that research shows captions benefit all students, not just those with auditory processing disorders, or deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Captioning facilitates note taking, enhances understanding and recall and provides access to auditory content when variations of sound quality or surrounding noise creates distractions.

Q: Why isn't a transcript sufficient?

A: A transcript alone may not be considered *equal* communication access.

Q: Are there other ways to make media accessible besides captioning?

A: Providing a written transcript of the audio content, a sign language interpreter, or a classroom C- Print captionist as access for media offers only marginal access. For example, it is not possible to read a transcript or watch an interpreter and view a video simultaneously. This results in missing the visual information featured in the video while reading the transcript or watching the interpreter or vice versa.

Q: YouTube videos are captioned so why am I asked to have university-provided captioning created?

A: YouTube is innovating with their closed captioning service but it is not fully developed and therefore inaccurate at times. You should review captioning for YouTube content before showing it in class. If the YouTube captioning is not accurate, it should be captioned by TLS, after securing permission for use from the copyright holder.

Q: Which media are covered under these guidelines?

A: All media used in campus courses, online courses, and blended courses.

Q: Which media am I allowed to show in a course?

A: You may show media for which you are the copyright holder. In some cases, you may show

media for which you are not the copyright holder. Refer to the [Fair Use Checklist](#) or contact the [RIT Office of Legal Counsel](#) for guidance on legal use of media in the classroom.

Q: Doesn't "fair use" allow educational institutions to add captions to multimedia content?

A: It does not. Captions cannot be added without permission of the copyright owner. The copyright law may be found online at the [United States Copyright Office](#).

Q: Why would the electronic media need to be captioned if sign language interpreters are already assigned to the class?

A: It is difficult for a student to watch an interpreter and the media at the same time. In these situations, the student misses a good deal of information by not being able to view the screen and the interpreter simultaneously. In addition, electronic media is scripted, meaning it is presented at a much faster rate of speed than normal speech. This makes it nearly impossible for an interpreter to keep up with the dialog, so information is often missed.

Q: Why would the electronic media need to be captioned if a C-Print captionist is already assigned to the class?

A: The same holds true for classroom C-Print captionists as for interpreters—it is difficult for a student to watch the real-time screen and the electronic media at the same time. So the student misses a great deal of information. Also, the fact that electronic media is scripted means it is presented at a much faster rate of speed than normal speech. This makes it close to impossible for a captionist to keep up with the scripted dialog, so information is often missed.

Terminology:

Media includes DVDs, digitally streamed video (i.e. YouTube), recordings of televised programs and audio files, in web-based environments or other formats that include an audiovisual component.

Captioned media displays the audio content of the program as text. Captions not only display spoken dialogue or narration but also include speaker identification and sound effects. The captions are synchronized and equivalent in content to that of the audio.

Closed captioned media provides the option of having the captions appear on the screen through a decoder, which is built into a television, VHS deck, or DVD player.

Open captioned media does not require a decoder, as the captioning is permanently part of the picture and cannot be turned off.

English subtitles are included on many DVDs and may be turned on using the remote control to access the subtitle list. Subtitles display spoken dialog or narration only.

Subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing (SDH) are subtitles that contain spoken dialogue or narration and also include speaker identification and sound effects. SDH subtitles tend to be used on video formats that do not support closed captioning, such as Blu-Ray discs.