How to Create Captions and Transcripts

Captions and transcripts are required for every video in order to comply with Columbia University's accessibility policy.

- Captions are accompanying text of the audio content, displayed in time with the video.
- Transcripts are text equivalents of the video content. Transcripts can be used by viewers with or without the accompanying video.

You are responsible for creating captions and a transcript and making sure that they are accurate relative to the video they represent. If you are working with a video vendor, please inform them that captions and a transcript are required.

Different types of captions

The two most common types are closed captions (CC) and open captions.

Closed captions are the preferred type due to their flexibility for viewers. Their key differentiating feature is that they can be shown or hidden on sites such as YouTube and LinkedIn, whereas open captions cannot be. As a file type, they can be identified by their .srt suffix.

In contrast, open captions are permanently added to the video (a quality referred to as "burned in"). These captions cannot be turned off. These types of captions are ideal for social media and any other platform that does not play audio.

Paid captions and transcription services

The CBS MarComm team uses rev.com to create captions and transcripts. This is a paid service that can create captions and transcripts in a timely manner. They offer the ability to pay for AI generated captions or human generated captions. We strongly recommend human generated captions as they tend to be much more accurate.

Here are the steps to ordering captions and transcripts using Rev:
1. Choose "human captions"
2. Upload the video file, or share a link to the video
3. Under "output file format" you can select both "SubRip (.srt)" and "Transcript (.txt)". This will provide you with both the closed-captions file, and a separate transcript file
4. Click "checkout" and finalize your order, an estimated timeframe will be provided

After receiving the captions and transcript, you need to proofread to confirm that everything is correct and accurate to the accompanying audio content. Pay close attention to the spelling of Columbia-specific acronyms and people's names, as they are where you will find errors most often.

Free services

YouTube can auto-generate captions for videos that you have uploaded. However, these captions are not up to the standards of the ADA. You can rely on this service, but you must check their accuracy manually.

Editing software such as Adobe Premiere Pro has transcription and caption services built in, but these also require manual proofreading as a final step in the process.

Questions?

The University has more information on their [Creating Accessible Video page](). For other questions, contact [communications@gsb.columbia.edu]().