

How to Transcribe for Closed Captioning

Closed captioning products MacCaption and CaptionMaker allow you to easily author, edit, encode and repurpose video captions for television, web and mobile delivery. Utilizing exclusive e-Captioning™ technology, MacCaption (for Mac) and CaptionMaker (for Windows) simplify the process of complying with FCC regulatory requirements, enabling greater access to broadcast content for television, online and mobile viewers.

Introduction

For someone who is new to non-live offline captioning, the most basic skill is to properly create a transcript of the video that needs to be captioned for TV broadcast. This article describes the simple guidelines and tools that are used by closed captioning service companies.

Transcription Comes Before Captioning

A transcript must be created before the closed captioning process can begin for pre-recorded material. While listening to a video, a typist can easily transcribe the video using any standard word processor. Since closed captioning software is designed to format and timestamp the transcribed text for TV broadcast, the transcription process is done faster outside the captioning software.

The transcription of the video can be done listening to a small video or audio file such as .MP3. This article describes several ways to do transcription.

V-Pedal

V-Pedal is a device that controls the playback of video and audio files on a computer using a push down foot pedal. This device is a time saver because it allows the transcriber to easily pause and rewind the video without having to take his/her hands off the keyboard. V-Pedal devices can connect via a USB port to either Mac or Windows software.

Speech-to-Text Technology

There are several ways that speech-to-text software can speed up the transcription process. The first is a fully automated solution such as MacSpeech Scribe which is software that generates a transcript from an audio file. The software can read the audio waveform and try to match the sound to words in a dictionary. The results vary, and typically require the user to proofread and correct mistakes.

Another option is to train the user's voice with Dragon Dictate, and repeat what is being said in the video. The result is a plain text document. This is a good solution because it is very accurate. Punctuation will still need to be corrected.

Recently, mobile phones have been equipped with speech-to-text technology that can be used to create a transcript for captioning. Some users find it practical to simply speak into their mobile phone while watching a video to create the transcript for captioning.

Italics and Bold Text

When creating a transcript it is best to avoid using italics and bold. Italics in closed captioning generally mean that the speaker is off-screen. Do not use bold as it could result in text blinking on and off. TV sets and cable boxes do not have the ability to bold text, so we recommend avoiding bold text.

Changing Speakers

When importing a transcript into captioning software, the captioner looks for a change in speakers to start a new caption block. A good captioning project should have an indicator for the viewer to show a change in speaker. The transcript can help this effort by placing a symbol before the speaker change. The characters ">>" typically shows this change.

Tab Delimited

If line breaks or timecode are critical for the captioning project, a simple tab character can be placed in between the text. In the same way spreadsheet software can separate cells, captioning software can do so when it detects a tab character. For example, if a sentence is long, a tab character will put a line break in the text when available.

File Formats for Text Documents

Although captioning software can accept a variety of text files such as .DOC, RTF, and .TXT, the recommended file format is a plain text document. Many word processors may include extraneous data in native file formats such as margins, footnotes, and other non-text related code. Most word processors can save the document as a plain text file.

