

Captioning

Captioning—a visual representation of the audio portion of videotape material—enables deaf learners to have full access to materials used in the classroom. With an ever-expanding pool of captioning agencies providing a wider array of options, including modem technology, and because of the greater availability of other low-cost captioning alternatives, including non-video captioning such as C-Print™ and CART, access to classroom materials and lectures has become much easier. The purpose of this tipsheet is to familiarize educators with the variety of captioning formats available, provide information about services addressing the need for captioned material, and identify potential options for promoting access to video programming for deaf learners.

CAPTIONING COMES IN SEVERAL FORMATS TO MEET A VARIETY OF NEEDS.

1. Open/Closed Captioning

Closed captions (CC) are typically enclosed in black boxes and displayed on Line 21 of the TV set. These captions are invisible on the TV screen unless a decoding capability (a decoder or TV with decoder chip) is used.

Open captions can be “CC” captions recorded as “open” captions for visible display without the need for decoding, or they can appear as subtitles similar to those seen in foreign films and displayed with upper/lower case lettering and a drop shadow effect.

2. Online/Offline (Prescribed) Captioning

Online captioning is created using a stenographic keyboard that communicates with special software normally used with a laptop. These captions scroll up to three lines on the screen simultaneously with program presentation or airing, without script preparation. This process is called “*real-time*” captioning, which can be done, at sometimes very large distances, from program origination through modem technology. For example, some news captioning is prepared live by real-time captioners located hundreds of miles away from the news stations.

Offline captioning involves preparation of the captioning script for prerecorded programs, including caption formatting into appropriate lengths for display, language editing, caption placement, speaker identification, use of special fonts, and time coding. Offline captions are “encoded” onto a program master or “live displayed” during broadcast.

3. Verbatim/Edited Captioning

Many programs use verbatim, or word-for-word, captioning either because the captions must be prepared live or because of the philosophy of “full access” to the program.

Others incorporate caption editing strategies, such as simplifying complex language, to accommodate the reading and language levels of the primary audience, particularly K-12. This is important, because viewers have only one opportunity to view the captions.

4. Computer-Aided Realtime Translation (CART)

This process is similar to real-time captioning except that it incorporates a combination of notebook computer and real-time captioning software to provide “video-less” captioning on either a computer monitor or a wall screen. It also is used in meetings and involves some language paraphrasing and two-way communication. For additional information, request a copy of the “CART Teacher Tipsheet.”

HOW TO MAKE VIDEO MATERIALS AVAILABLE FOR CLASSROOM USE.

1. Which is more useful: Interpreting or Captioning?

- Ask your students about their preferences for program access. Determine whether low-cost alternatives such as interpreting or transcripts would be sufficient to meet their needs. As mentioned under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), publicly funded institutions must give “primary consideration” to the communication preferences of individuals with disabilities.
- The determination of the captioning option should also be based on:
 - a. Type of program: some videos are very difficult to interpret in ASL, especially those with quick scene changes, multiple speakers, or foreign accents.
 - b. The frequency and duration of program use: captioning is more cost-effective if programs will have long-term, frequent use. Once a program is captioned, it eliminates the need for using an interpreter every time it is shown in class.
- If the school is producing its own videos, i.e., for distance learning, it is recommended that captioning costs be built into the video production budget.

2. Is the captioned material available?

- Check your school media center or library for available existing captioned videotapes. The Captioned Media Program (CMP), funded through

the U.S. Department of Education, has a collection of 4,000+ open captioned videotapes available for free loan, intended for K-13+. Their website address is: www.cfv.org.

- When leasing or purchasing instructional video, be sure that you or your media center orders the captioned version, if available.

3. Which captioning format will meet your needs?

Real-time captioning is used for lectures, presentations, or live shows.

Offline rollup captioning is appropriate for prerecorded programs that are talk-oriented with little action, including documentaries, where generally one person speaks at a time.

Offline pop-up captioning is suitable for programs that consist of continuous, fast-paced dialogue among multiple speakers, requiring caption placement and formatting into one- to four-line captions.

Costs between real-time and offline captioning differ considerably. Real-time captioning generally costs \$50 to \$175 per hour of programming, while charges for offline captioning are given by the length of the program, usually about \$15 per minute. Rollup captions are also cheaper to produce than pop-up captions. It is wise to compare costs and quality of captioning among providers.

4. What procedures should you follow to get your videotapes captioned?

- Assess available funding in your school or organization. Check to be sure you get copyright clearance to caption your program.
- Explore various captioning vendors to see what types of captioning formats are provided and compare costs per hour/minute of video. Many captioning vendors have websites. Check out www.captions.org/alphalinks2.cfm for links to captioning agencies and hardware/software manufacturers.
- Contact Captioned Media Program for a free copy of "Approved Captioning Service Vendors (NADH-11)." Also contact the National Center for Accessible Media at WGBH-Boston for information regarding access to web-based video, digital television, and CD-ROM, at this Web address: www.wgbh.org/ncam.

Another affiliate of WGBH, The Caption Center, also provides consumer-related information on captioning implementation and guidelines, and can be contacted at www.wgbh.org/caption.

5. Is it feasible to do your own captioning?

- Costs can vary greatly depending on equipment and process.
- Contact Captioned Media Program for a free copy of "Information about Captioning Equipment and its Manufacturers (NADH-23)" regarding necessary captioning hardware/software and price ranges based on the types of features and level of capability desired.
- Considerations for acquiring captioning capability:
 - a. Is the need for captioning considerable enough to justify expense?
 - b. Who will be doing the captioning?
 - c. How will the training be given to people who will be doing the captioning? NTID offers captioning internships in the Instructional Television Department upon request.
 - d. What kind of engineering support is available?

AVAILABLE FUNDING FOR CAPTIONING

Check the Federal Register for grant application notices of the Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. The captioning grants information can be found under Chart 5, and can be accessed at this web link: <http://ocfo.ed.gov/grntinfo/forecast/forecast.htm#chart5>.

Captions are an important aspect of the learning process for deaf and hard-of-hearing students and provide full access to the classroom experience. It is well worth the time and effort for educators to search for and provide quality captioning services to meet the needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing learners.

For more information on how to contact professionals in the captioning field, as well as other topics covered by the PEPNet Tipsheet series, visit PEPNet's website at www.pepnet.org.

These materials were developed in the course of agreement between the Research to Practice Division, Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education and the PEPNet-Northeast Regional Center at the Rochester Institute of Technology under grant #H326D060004. Additional information about current pepnet 2 project activities and resources can be found at www.pepnet.org. Year of publication: 2000.



This **PEPNet Tipsheet** was compiled by Peter Schragle, Associate Professor and Senior Captioning Specialist, NTID; Rochester, New York.