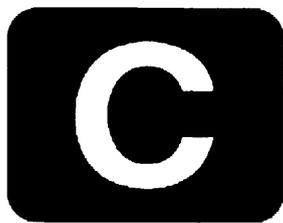


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# DCMP *Captioning Key*

## Quality Captioning

1. A Definition of Captioning
2. The DCMP Captioning Philosophy
3. Elements of Quality Captioning

### **A Definition of Captioning**

Captioning is the key to opening up a world of information for persons with hearing loss or literacy needs. There are more than 30 million Americans with some type of hearing loss. Millions of others are illiterate, learning to read, or use English as a second language.

Captioning (<http://www.dcmp.org/equalaccess/c.html>) is the process of converting the audio content of a television broadcast, webcast, film, video, CD-ROM, DVD, live event, or other production into text and displaying the text on a screen or monitor. Captions not only display words as the textual equivalent of spoken dialogue or narration, but they also include speaker identification, sound effects, and music description. Captioning is critical for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, but it also aids the reading and literacy skills development of many others.

It is important that the captions are (1) synchronized and appear at approximately the same time as the audio is delivered, (2) equivalent and equal in content to that of the audio, including speaker identification and sound effects; and (3) accessible and readily available to those who need or want them.

### **The DCMP Captioning Philosophy**

The DCMP believes that all captioning should include as much of the original language as possible; words or phrases which may be unfamiliar to the audience should not be replaced with simple synonyms. However, editing the original transcription may be necessary to provide time for the caption to be completely read and for it to be in synchronization with the audio.

### **Elements of Quality Captioning**

#### **Accurate**

Errorless captions are the goal for each production.

#### **Consistent**

Uniformity in style and presentation of all captioning features is crucial for viewer understanding.

### **Clear**

A complete textual representation of the audio, including speaker identification and non-speech information, provides clarity.

### **Readable**

Captions are displayed with enough time to be read completely, are in synchronization with the audio, and are not obscured by (nor do they obscure) the visual content.

### **Equal**

Equal access requires that the meaning and intention of the material is completely preserved.

*The above guidelines are consistent with the 2014 mandates by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).*

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## **About DCMP**

The Described and Captioned Media Program (<https://dcmp.org/>) is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and administered by the National Association of the Deaf.

 **Contact Us** ([captioning\\_contact.html](#))

## **Links**

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[Public Relations \(https://dcmp.org/public-relations\)](https://dcmp.org/public-relations)

## **Partner Sites**

[National Association of the Deaf \(https://nad.org/\)](https://nad.org/)

[U.S. Department of Education \(http://www.ed.gov/\)](http://www.ed.gov/)

## **Related Resources**

["Keys to Access" Landing Page \(https://www.dcmp.org/keystoaccess\)](https://www.dcmp.org/keystoaccess)

[DCMP's \*Equal Access in the Classroom\* \(https://www.dcmp.org/equalaccess\)](https://www.dcmp.org/equalaccess)

[DCMP's \*Description Key\* \(https://www.dcmp.org/descriptionkey\)](https://www.dcmp.org/descriptionkey)

[DCMP's \*Caption It Yourself \(CIY\)\* \(https://www.dcmp.org/ciy\)](https://www.dcmp.org/ciy)

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# Welcome to the *Description Key*

1. A Definition of Description
2. The DCMP Description Philosophy

Description is the key to opening a world of information for persons with a vision loss, literacy needs, or loss of cognitive abilities. The American Foundation for the Blind reports that 21.5 million adults have vision loss (<http://www.afb.org/section.aspx?SectionID=15&TopicID=413&DocumentID=4900>) and 94,000 children with a vision loss are being helped by some kind of special education (<http://www.afb.org/section.aspx?SectionID=8>). While description was developed for people who are blind or visually impaired, sighted children may also benefit from description's concise, objective translation of media's key visual components. Specialized learners, such as students with learning differences, English language learners, and children on the autism spectrum, benefit from its value in literacy development (e.g., vocabulary and reading) and content learning. DCMP's Listening Is Learning campaign focuses on these benefits ([http://listeningislearning.org/background\\_description-no-bvi.html](http://listeningislearning.org/background_description-no-bvi.html)).

These guidelines are a key for those performing description, and cover a range of topics from preparing to describe (<http://descriptionkey.org/preparation.html>) to determining both what ([http://descriptionkey.org/what\\_to\\_describe.html](http://descriptionkey.org/what_to_describe.html)) information needs to be described and how to describe ([http://descriptionkey.org/how\\_to\\_describe.html](http://descriptionkey.org/how_to_describe.html)) it. The information is also applicable to vendors and other businesses (<http://www.dcmp.org/ai/179/>) that provide description for broadcast television, movies, and other media. Thus, it will also be useful to media producers/distributors and others who are considering describing their products or learning about description. Some background information and rationale are included for the novice, as well as an evolving list of description resources ([http://descriptionkey.org/description\\_resources.html](http://descriptionkey.org/description_resources.html)) to help improve the quality and efficiency of one's description.

For those interested in a condensed version of these guidelines, a "Description Tip Sheet" (<http://www.dcmp.org/caai/nadh227.pdf>) is available from the DCMP Learning Center (<http://www.dcmp.org/About/Info/Default.aspx>). In addition, this YouTube video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cuaSu1ZxZDY#t=8m05s>) from a Video Description Research and Development Center (VDRDC) webinar presented in October, 2012 summarizes important considerations.

## A Definition of Description

Description is the verbal depiction of key visual elements in media and live productions. Also known as "audio description" or "video description," the description of media involves the interspersing of these depictions with the program's original audio.

The vocabulary and language structure used in the description ([http://descriptionkey.org/how\\_to\\_describe.html#4](http://descriptionkey.org/how_to_describe.html#4)) of educational media should be consistent with that used in the program being described. It is also important to make a distinction between media that is

produced for educational purposes and that which is produced purely for entertainment—the "key visual elements" of an educational program should be those that serve in conveying a specific learning goal.

## DCMP Description Philosophy

It is vital that media be described in such a manner that an individual program's educational content is accessible to students with a wide range of visual impairments. It is important to ensure that description does not distract viewers from the educational content of a production by being overly complex or, on the other hand, overly simplistic. It's been long said that "pictures are worth a thousand words," and it's in choosing which of those words best convey otherwise inaccessible images to students with vision loss that the true skill of a describer is practiced.

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