
Subtitling checklist

- Which languages are used in the film (and at which percentage)?
Are there any existing subtitles, transcripts, or just scripts to start from? (Particularly for non-European languages, are there any English translations?)
- To which language(s) should the translation be done? Is a multi-lingual subtitle (1 language per line) needed? Which spelling or regional variant should be used for languages like English (UK vs. US?), Spanish, Portuguese, etc.?
For German, should ß (sz) be used (it usually isn't in Switzerland)?
- In case of doubt, should the focus be on a more literal translation (at the expense of readability) or on good comprehensibility (at the expense of attention to detail)?
- Should dialect or difficult to understand parts be subtitled?
Should exclamations, swear words, names (when repeated) etc. be subtitled?
- Are there intertitles, lower thirds, lettering (e.g. banners in demos)? Will they be replaced by translated graphics (= separate picture versions), or should they be subtitled? Are there any special formal requests (e.g. ALL CAPS)? How should these be handled when they occur in parts with dense dialogues?
- Are there any songs, literary texts, plays, poems, or the like?
Would you like a literal or free translation? Are there any special formal requests (e.g. italics *)? If existing translations are to be used and the legal situation has been clarified, please include them!
- Is there already a film title in the language of the subtitles? Is there a desired title or is the subtitling of the film title skipped?
- What is the current state of the film project? Subtitles are ideally done after the picture lock and the final sound mixing. If the subtitling is done earlier (e.g. because of submissions to festivals), additional work should be expected for any changes.
- Are there any formal requirements due to the image format or because of the further use of the subtitles (delivery format, number of lines, line length, font size, ...)?
- Should the subtitling be included in the end credits, or should it be added in an additional subtitle at the end?

* We recommend using as little special formatting as possible because it is one of the most frequent sources of problems, particularly when fading in or converting. It also tends to be irritating to the eyes. Italics in particular come from the tradition of written transcripts, where external sound sources are not directly recognizable and needed to be marked visually.