

[Recorded Captioning Style Guide]

July 2020

Table of contents

Working with Ai-Media

The Knowledge Base

Accuracy

Overview

Research and verification

Inaudible and unknown terms

Word accuracy

Punctuation and grammar

Punctuation guide

Presentation

Caption splitting

Caption blocking

Speaker labelling

Timing

Sound effects and description

Foreign and Indigenous languages

Music

Style

Formatting numbers

Formatting complex numbers

Formatting miscellaneous

Formatting mathematics

Mathematics symbols

Formatting miscellaneous

Helpful resources

Working with Ai-Media

You are now a part of Ai-Media's remote workforce community. Congratulations!

Our mission is to make content accessible through high quality captions and transcripts, one word at a time. Whether you are a seasoned captioner or if this is your first experience with transcription, it is important to familiarise yourself with Ai-Media's style guide. This guide will take you through our expectations and practices.

What does high quality look like?

High quality transcription is accurate, easy to understand and conforms to our presentation style. A good grasp of English grammar and punctuation rules are essential to producing quality work. Always keep the viewer in mind when you are captioning or transcribing. If you had a reduced capacity to hear or understand the audio, how would you like information to be presented?

High quality captions and transcription:					
Should <u>accurately</u> reflect the audio	Should be <u>presented</u> in a way that enhances readability	Should conform to Ai-Media's <u>formatting rules</u>	Should make it clear <u>who is speaking</u>	Should <u>start or stop</u> within one second of audible speech	Should read just like <u>well-written English</u>

Working with Ai-Media

The Knowledge Base

The Knowledge Base is our number one resource for all things captioning and transcription at Ai-Media. Here, you can find out more about our procedures and standards, information about how to use our platforms, how to claim work, tutorial videos and more.

For more information, please visit the Knowledge Base:

<https://kb.ai-media.tv/article-categories/captioning/>



Quality assurance

As an agent on Ai-Media's platforms, tasks that you submit are quality checked to ensure we are continuing to delivering the highest possible quality to our clients. You will also regularly receive feedback on tasks you have completed. This helps you to improve as a captioner and transcriber.

If your work consistently hits our quality targets and you are contributing regularly, your account may be promoted. This will enable you to access different work types. If your work is submitted to a poor standard, you will receive an email addressing any issues that were found. If your work doesn't improve or if you do not engage with our feedback, your account may be deactivated or demoted. This will limit your access to different work types.

Accuracy

Captions and transcripts must accurately reflect the media that is being transcribed.

This section will cover:

- What to transcribe
- What not to transcribe
- How to research and verify terms
- What to do when you can't verify a term
- How to use punctuation in transcription

Overview

Good captions and transcripts accurately capture what is said.

Here is a quick reference guide on what to transcribe and how to make sure your transcription provides an accurate representation of a task's audio.



Do

- Do use correct spelling and search on Google if you're not 100% sure.
- Do [verify](#) all names, places, phrases and special terms.
- Do leave out "ums", "ahs" [false starts](#) and short interjections from other speakers like "Mm-hmm" or "Uh-huh".



Do not

- Do not change or correct speakers' words.
- Do not add, delete or rearrange words.
- Do not paraphrase.
- Do not remove swear words if they're spoken - if something is in the audio, it should be in the transcription.

Research and verification

Accuracy

Words and specialized terms that you are not familiar must be verified.

Specialized terms are often the most important words in a video. For example, misspelling a company name when transcribing a video for that company is like using the wrong name when addressing somebody - it's important to get them right! So make sure you take time to verify the correct capitalization and spelling of names, places, phrases and special terms.

Make sure to search for every term	Ensure all names, places, phrases and special terms are verified by searching on Google.
	If you can't find an unfamiliar word, try a few spelling variations. You can also search more effectively if you add in additional terms for context.
	When you think you've found the term, keep in mind the legitimacy of the webpage you're viewing. For example, spelling on an official website is more reliable than a personal blog.
Pay attention to graphics on videos	Often, key words and jargon will be written on the video you are transcribing.
	The video is always a good place to look if you're unsure of what someone has said.
	Always match spelling and formatting with what is on the video, even if it contradicts Ai-Media style . The only exception to this is if, after verifying a term, you discover that it has been misspelled on the video.

Inaudible and unknown terms

Even after going through the appropriate steps to search for a term, sometimes you still might not be able to verify the correct spelling or capitalisation.

You do not want to transcribe something that is incorrect or misleading. In these circumstances, (INAUDIBLE) and (UNKNOWN) are used to indicate that you were not able to understand or verify something that was said.

(INAUDIBLE)

- The inaudible tag is used for content that is **not discernible** – where you cannot understand what was said.
- It is stylised in all caps and round brackets.
- For example, “I said that (INAUDIBLE) was fun.” Or “STUDENT: (INAUDIBLE)”

(UNKNOWN)

- The unknown tag is used for content that **is discernible but cannot be verified** – where you can understand what was said but cannot verify how it is spelled.
- It is stylised in all caps and round brackets.
- (UNKNOWN) is often used for scientific or medical terms.

Before using (INAUDIBLE) and (UNKNOWN), make sure you:

- Listen again, and then again. Persistence is key for tricky content.
- Play more of the audio for context. Often, the word or phrase in question will be repeated.
- Make a reasonable effort to verify all terms. Use (INAUDIBLE) and (UNKNOWN) only as a last resort.

Word accuracy

Good captions accurately capture what is said.

We know what it's like when you're caught up transcribing and you write what you *think* you heard, but it's not exactly right. That's why it's important to proofread everything you do, even if you go back and review chunks as you're timing. Pay close attention to the content and make sure that what you've written makes logical sense.

✗ Poor quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changed a word• 'Fridge module' doesn't make sense• 'Noodle' doesn't make sense here• Gussed last sentence	LECTURER: Like I said I would do fridge module this year.
		I'll put the information up on the noodle. Left like I can see
✓ Good quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Captions are exactly the same as what is said in the audio and make logical sense• Used (INAUDIBLE) label because the speaker was unclear	LECTURER: <u>As</u> I said I would do <u>for each</u> module this year.
		I'll put the information up on <u>Moodle</u> . (INAUDIBLE) can see

Word accuracy

Not every word that's spoken needs to be transcribed.

People don't always speak in perfect sentences in day-to-day life. Natural speech often contains words or sounds that do not need to be included in captions and transcripts. These include noises like 'uhm' and 'ah', **interjections**, **false starts** and **private conversations**. Background noise should be captioned with the [descriptive caption](#) (BACKGROUND CHATTER). To make your captions clear and easy to understand, make an informed choice to leave out speech or sounds which do not add meaning to the content. At the same time, keep in mind it's always better to leave something in if you're unsure. Below are some examples of content that does not need to be transcribed.



lecturer: So if I c...wh- Sorry, just give me a minute.

Above is an example of a [false start](#). This is common and does not need to be captioned.



LECTURER: Sorry, just give me a minute.



- (Lecturer) That's all for today. Thanks.

- (Student) Hi, can I talk to (INAUDIBLE)

- (Lecturer) (INAUDIBLE) what you've got to do it (INAUDIBLE)

Above is an example of a private conversation during a lecture. This is common and does not need to be captioned.



LECTURER: That's all for today. Thanks.

(BACKGROUND CHATTER)

Punctuation and grammar

Good punctuation and grammar is crucial to producing high quality transcription.

For caption files in particular, where text only appears on-screen for a few seconds, the ability to quickly read and make sense of information is crucial. Good punctuation helps the viewer make sense of transcription. Missing or unnecessary punctuation, however, can make sentences confusing or misleading to read. Below are some common mistakes which have a large impact of viewer comprehension and readability.



Poor quality

- Is missing full stops (periods) at the end of sentences
- No capital letters at the start of sentences
- No commas to separate clauses (Eg. 'First of all')
- No ellipsis to indicate a pause in speech (Eg. 'data')

because this is very important
for your assignment too

so how do you do that?

First of all you need
to select your data

this the first thing

so select your data, hang on.

because this is very important
for your assignment too.

So, how do you do that?

First of all, you need
to select your data.

This is the first thing.

So, select your data... Hang on.



Good quality

- Has full stops (periods) at the end of sentences
- Capital letters at the start of sentences
- Commas used to separate clauses and after filler words (Eg. 'So')
- Pause in speech indicated with ellipsis (Eg. 'data...')

Punctuation and grammar

Accuracy

Punctuate with your eyes, not your ears.

When you're transcribing, it's very easy to put punctuation marks in unnecessary places when the person talking pauses or changes the inflection of their voice. When people speak, they don't always pause at grammatically correct places, so you need to keep an eye on what you're writing and judge whether the punctuation makes sense within the sentence.



Commas for example
should be used sparingly

unless like this sentence
there are a lot of interrupted clauses.

But a sentence like this,
doesn't need any commas,

because all of the concepts,
flow together.



Commas, for example,
should be used sparingly

unless, like this sentence,
there are a lot of interrupted clauses.

But a sentence like this
doesn't need any commas

because all of the concepts
flow together.

Punctuation guide

Accuracy

Symbol	Description	Example	Used?
'	Used when listing, to separate clauses, after filler words, before quotes and when addressing someone.	That's great, thanks. Can I have salmon, asparagus and eggs, please? It was really lovely to see you, Nathan, I hope we can catch up again sometime.	Yes
. ? !	Used at the end of whole sentences.	What did you say? You said goodbye! Oh, OK. Have fun tonight.	Yes
'	Used in contractions and to indicate a possessive.	That cat's cute. Not all cats are as cute. Mike's cat is ugly. It's not its fault.	Yes
' '	Used for short quotes, answers and media titles.	The answer is 'A'. He said 'OK' and went on captioning 'The Young and the Restless'.	Yes
“ ”	Used for long and direct quotes.	She said, “Use double quotes when quoting poems, prose or conversation.”	Yes
#	Used for captioning song lyrics .	# You've got a friend. #	Yes
-	Used for an addition or aside where a full stop (period) or comma is not applicable. Also for compound adjectives.	I didn't bring my umbrella - I always forget to bring it. I know my 65-year-old father won't be happy.	Sometimes
:	Used only as part of a speaker label.	LECTURER: So you can see that we have covered all our topics.	Sometimes
...	Use when there is a significant pause in speech or when another speaker interrupts. Use only when necessary.	LECTURER: I thought I saw... Never mind, what were we... STUDENT: You were showing us the assignment.	Sometimes
; [] { } ♪ £ € ¥	Not used in Ai-Media transcription.		No

Presentation

Caption and transcription files should look consistent, no matter of content.

This section will cover:

- How to split and block captions
- How to label speakers
- How to time captions
- How to transcribe music, sound effects and descriptions
- How to transcribe foreign and Indigenous languages

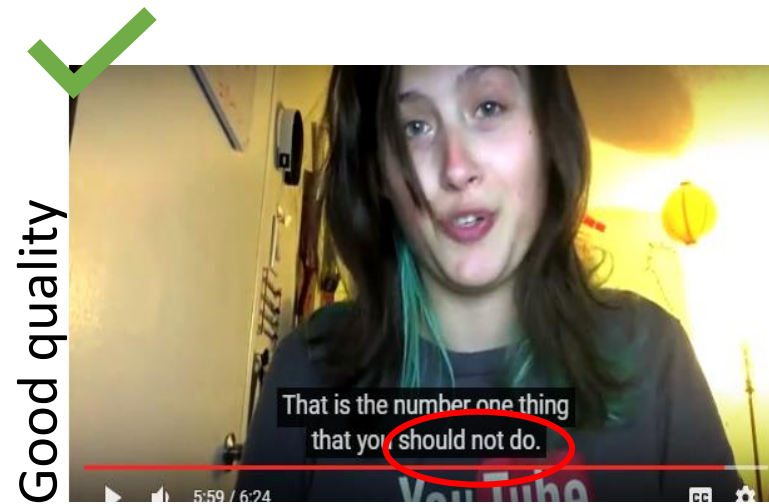
Caption splitting

The readability of captions is improved when they are created with the content of the audio in mind.

As a general rule, keeping chunks of meaning together improves readability. Each caption should be able to be understood on its own, regardless of the captions that have come before or after it. Words which are crucial to understanding a particular section of the dialogue should not be separated.



Poor quality



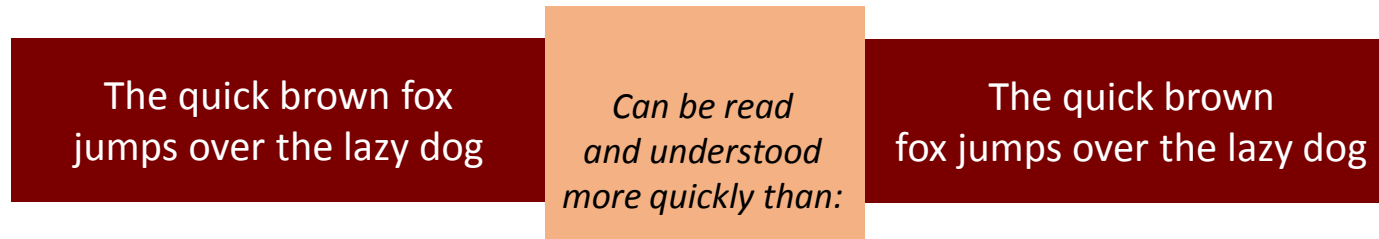
Good quality

In the example above, the poor quality split is misleading because the caption does not include 'not do'. Instead, the viewer would initially believe that the speaker is talking about something they *should* do, when this is in fact the opposite meaning.

Caption splitting

Like splitting, good blocking ensures concepts are kept together within a single caption.

Blocking is like splitting, but for individual lines within a single caption. Like splitting, blocking improves readability by keeping chunks of meaning on the same line. When writing captions, ensure you consider which words sit on which line. For example:



Key points for splitting and blocking:

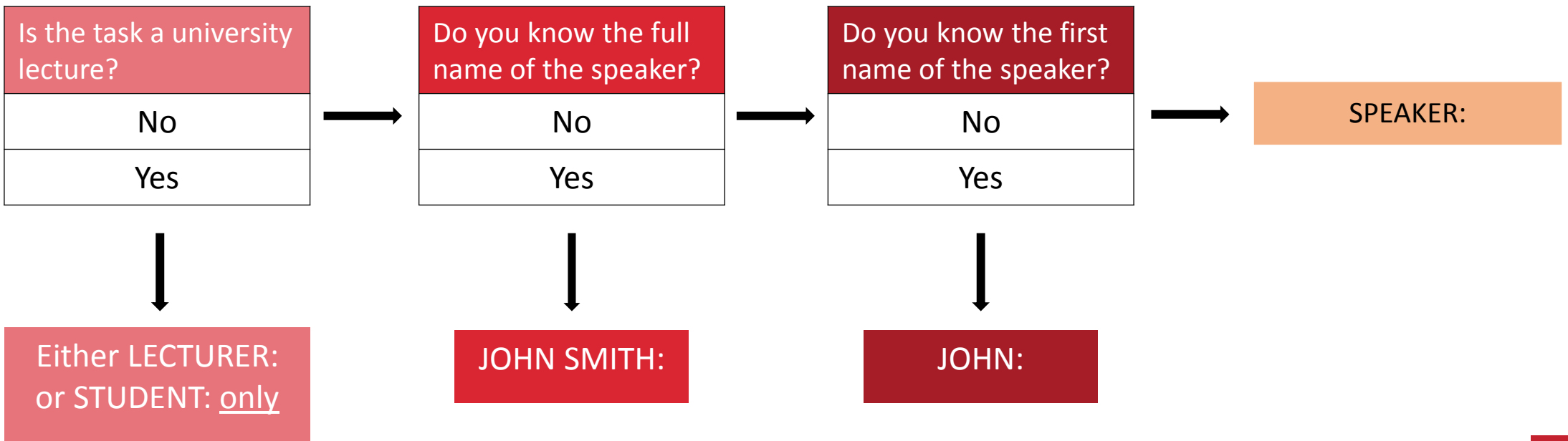
- Keep subjects and phrases together within the same caption, and on the same line where possible.
- For example, nouns should always be in the same caption and on the same line, where possible (eg. Empire State Building).
- Start a new caption if a sentence ends or if a new speaker begins speaking. Only keep two separate whole sentences in the same caption if they are short and can fit.
- If a complete sentence can fit in one caption, it should.

Speaker labelling

Labelling speakers ensures the viewer understands who is speaking at any given time.

To keep files consistent and easy to read, we label speakers using their **name or title in all capitals**, followed by a **colon**. Labels must be included every time the person speaking changes, even if they've already spoken previously or are visible in the video. Often, the [task notes](#) will help you identify the names of speakers. The chart below describes how to label speakers based on the type of task you are working on.

How to label a speaker



Speaker labelling

The following are examples of good quality speaker labels versus poor quality speaker labels.



Good quality

- Correctly formatted speaker labels.
- Change of speaker indicated.
- Full tag used each time the speaker changes.

LEIGH: I'm here with Melissa on the Mornington Peninsula.

MELISSA: Hi, Leigh.
It's great to be here.



Poor quality

- The speaker label is formatted incorrectly on both captions. Ai-Media standard does not use square brackets or dashes.
- On the second caption, you can see from the dialogue that the speaker has change, however the speaker label is missing.

- [Leigh] I'm here with Melissa on the Mornington Peninsula.

- Hi, Leigh.
It's great to be here.

Timing

The way that captions are timed has a large effect on the viewer's experience and overall comprehension.

Out-of-sync captions can be confusing and misleading. Here are some key rules to keep in mind when timing captions.

High quality captions should be timed so that:

Each caption matches the dialogue of the media.

Each caption starts to play when the first word can be heard and stops when the last word is heard.

Each caption does not appear on screen for longer than **ten seconds** or less than **one second**.

Each caption starts or stops within **one second** of audible speech.

Each caption is on screen long enough to be comfortably read by the viewer. In cases with fast dialogue, it is acceptable to start a caption slightly early or end it slightly late to ensure it is on screen long enough.

Sound effects and descriptions

Style

Sound effects and descriptions refer to anything audible which isn't spoken words. This could be tone of voice, a significant non-verbal sound made by a speaker or a substantial interruption to the speaker.

It is important to consider the viewer when transcribing description and sound effects. Ask yourself if the full meaning of the audio can be conveyed without them. If not, make sure to include it to your transcription. Descriptive captions are always formatted in **capital letters** with **round brackets**. Below are some commonly used examples.

Example	Description	Conditions
(LAUGHS), (LAUGHTER)	Use when laughter can be heard.	Use only if there's a significant reaction by either a speaker or the audience.
(CROSSTALK)	Use when speakers talk over or interrupt each other.	Use only if the overlapping speech is not disable. Ensure you caption everything you can understand.
(PHONE RINGS), (DOOR SLAMS)	Use when heard. These are common interruptions which sometimes occur in talks or lectures.	Use only if referenced by the speaker after they occur or if they temporarily make audio indiscernible.
(WHISPERING), (SARCASTICALLY)	Use to indicate tone of voice. Eg. "(WHISPERING) But don't tell anyone." "(SARCASTICALLY) I'm so excited for class today."	Use only if necessary for comprehension. Ask yourself if the full meaning of the sentence is clear without it.

Sound effects and descriptions

Style

Example	Description	Conditions
(BACKGROUND CHATTER) (AUDIO DISTORTS)	Use when background noise is heard or audio cuts out. Make these captions five seconds long, and begin captioning with a speaker label when captionable dialogue resumes.	Use when there is any break in captionable audio greater than five seconds. Use these only once at the beginning before speech resumes.
(VIDEO PLAYS), (VIDEO ENDS) (MUSIC PLAYS), (MUSIC ENDS)	Use if a speaker plays media or music within a lecture or presentation.	These labels do not replace transcription. If there is audible speech, sound effects or music within the media, this must be transcribed as well.
(WHISTLES), (SNAPS FINGERS), (SIGHS HEAVILY), (KEYBOARD CLICKING), (COUGHS)	Use when heard. These are common sounds that speakers might make during talks. Eg. "And it was gone, just like... (SNAPS FINGERS)." "(SIGHS HEAVILY) I've had a tough day."	Use only if necessary for comprehension. Does the speaker make reference to the sound? Ask yourself if the full meaning of the sentence is clear without it. If it is, refrain from using these.

Foreign and Indigenous languages

Style

It is important to indicate if a language other than English is spoken or referenced.

Transcribing foreign or Indigenous languages is crucial to conveying the full meaning of a file. Like [sound effects](#), these are always formatted in **capital letters** with **round brackets**. [Foreign dialogue should never be transcribed](#), even if you understand what is being said. It is also important to look for any useful information in the [notes](#) of the task page if you encounter a language other than English.



Correctly formatting music adds meaning to captions and transcripts.

Like sound effects, music is always formatted in [capital letters with round brackets](#). It is important to [verify](#) any music and songs that you hear. Google, YouTube and [Shazam](#) are great tools to use when researching music. For example, lyrics can be searched on Google, and then verified by listening to the song on YouTube. Exactly how music is captioned depends on whether or not lyrics can be heard.

When music without lyrics plays:

- Include the title of the song and the name of the artist.
- Use single quotation marks around the title of the song.

(‘WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD’ BY LOUIS ARMSTRONG PLAYS)

Example:

When music with lyrics plays:

- Lyrics should be written in sentence case with a capital letter at the beginning of each new caption block.
- Each new caption block should begin with a [hash sign](#) for the duration of the lyrics. Lyrics should end with another hashmark, followed by a full stop.

And I think to myself
What a wonderful world. #

If you cannot identify a piece of music:

- Use [description](#) to express the style or tone of the music.
- Keep description short and to-the-point.
- (MUSIC PLAYS) is also acceptable.

(JAZZ MUSIC PLAYS)

[Style]

To keep caption and transcription files consistent, they must conform to our in-house formatting standards.

This section will cover:

- How to format numbers
- How to format dates, time, measurements and currency
- How to format websites, email addresses and university course codes
- How to format mathematics

Formatting numbers

Ai-Media has its own in-house formatting standards to keep our captions and transcripts consistent.

As a general rule, numbers under ten are formatted as words, except when used in mathematics, measurements, dates, time or currency. Numbers over ten are written numerically. Below are some commonly used examples.

Numbers				
Example	Formatting	Example	Exceptions	Additional points
Zero - ten	Written as words	LECTURER: Let's move on to question nine .	Decimals and formulas, times, dates, currency and measurements.	Numbers below zero (eg. -27) are written as numbers.
11 - 999,999	Written as numbers	DANNY: Welcome, all 102 attendees!	If the formatting on the video is different.	Numbers with more than four digits need a coma. Eg. 1,000, 10,000.
1 million+	Written as numbers and words	STUDENT: Was it 50 million years ago? LECTURER: No, about 2 billion years ago.	If the formatting on the video is different.	This includes millions, billions, trillions etc.

Formatting complex numbers

Style

Formatting numbers can be tricky when used in relation to dates, time, measurement or currency.

Ai-Media formatting is context-dependant. Rules around dates, times, measurements and currency override formatting rules for numbers alone. Below are some commonly used examples.

Dates, time, measurement, currency

Example	Formatting	Example	Exceptions	Additional points
Dates and years	Written as numbers and words	WOMAN: On December 25, 2008 ...	If the formatting on the video is different.	25 December, 2008 is also correct.
Time	Written as numbers	JANE KING: It's now 3:00 , let's begin.	If the formatting on the video is different.	3pm is also correct.
Measurements	Written as numbers	SPEAKER: They travelled 0.5km , or 500m .	If the formatting on the video is different.	Abbreviations (eg. km, m) are used for common terms only. Imperial measurements should be written as words (eg. feet, inches).
Currency	Written as numbers	KEVIN: It's \$3 each. Buy two and they're \$5.5 , a saving of 50 cents .	If the formatting on the video is different.	Cents is always spelled out.

Formatting miscellaneous

Sometimes, it can be difficult to know how to format particular words or phrases.

Specialized terms such as websites and course titles can be confusing to transcribe. If you're unsure of how to format something, it is important to [verify the term](#) on the internet to see how it is written. If in doubt, remember that the best transcription is always concise and easy to comprehend. Below are some common examples.

Miscellaneous formatting			
Example	What's said	How to format	Key points
Websites and email addresses	"The url is w w w dot moodle dot com dot au forward slash info"	"The url is <code>www.moodle.com.au/info</code> "	Search for the website to verify how the url is formatted.
University courses	Good morning students, welcome to P O L S nine hundred and sixteen.	"Good morning students, welcome to POLS90016."	Search for the course to verify how it is formatted.
Foreign currency	"The tally is 43 dollars, 10 pounds and an extra 11 bucks"	"The tally is \$43, 10 pounds and an extra 11 bucks."	Only use the \$ when 'dollars' is specifically said. Do not use other symbols, eg. £ . When a colloquial term like 'bucks' is used, do not change it.

Formatting mathematics

Style

Consistent formatting when transcribing mathematics lectures is key to providing meaningful captioning that can be easily understood.

Below are some key points to keep in mind when captioning and transcribing mathematics.

Key points for formatting mathematics	Numbers should be formatted numerically in formulas regardless of value, with the exception of fractions. For example: $y=x^2+23*11$.	
	Letters in formulas should be formatted the same as they appear in the media. If the task is audio-only, format as lowercase unless indicated in the speech.	
	An easy way to determine how to format something is to see if the symbol is on a basic keyboard. If it's not, spell it out.	
Examples	<i>What's said</i>	<i>How to format</i>
	"So what do we get? Dividend is two dollars ten divided by interest rate, one percent, minus growth rate."	"So what do we get? Dividend is \$2.10 divided by interest rate, 1%, minus growth rate."
	"That number would be P zero equals S two on one plus R. That would be ten thousand dollars on one plus point two four times three."	"That number would be $p_0=s_2/1+r$. That would be $\$10,000/1+0.24*3$."

Mathematics symbols

Style

Allowed symbols	
Symbol	Correct formatting
Plus	+
Minus	-
Divided by	/
Equals	=
Multiply	*
Percentage	%
Dollar	\$





Not allowed symbols		
Symbol	Incorrect formatting	Correct formatting
Fractions	$\frac{1}{8}, \frac{4}{5}$	one-eighth, four-fifths
Exponents	$a^b, 2^2$	a to the power of b, two squared
Degrees	$8^\circ, 22^\circ$	eight degrees, 22 degrees
Delta	Δ	Delta
Sigma	Σ	Sigma
Beta	B	Beta
Theta	Θ	Theta
Mu	μ	Mu
Pi	Π	Pi

Formatting miscellaneous

Style

Common words	
Correct formatting	Incorrect formatting
Alright	All right
OK	Okay, Ok
'Cause	Cos, coz
Straight away	Straightaway
Till	'Til, til
Good morning	Goodmorning
Goodnight	Good night
No-one	Noone, no one
Teammate	Team-mate, team mate

Helpful resources

Resource	Description
	<p>Knowledge Base: https://kb.ai-media.tv/article-categories/captioning/ Knowledge Base is our number one resource for all things captioning and transcription at Ai-Media. Here, you can find more about our procedures and standards, information about how to claim work, tutorial videos, walk-through guides and much more.</p> <p>Online Support: You can always email us at onlinesupport@ai-media.tv. We might not be able to get back to you straight away, but our experienced team can answer most of your queries.</p>
	<p>Grammarly: www.grammarly.com Grammarly helps you find the answers to any grammar problems you might encounter. The web extension flags spelling and grammar mistakes as you type.</p>
	<p>Grammar Book: http://www.grammarbook.com/ Grammar rules, punctuation rules and more!</p>
	<p>Lexico: https://www.lexico.com/ Powered by Oxford Dictionary, Lexico is a go-to for verifying spelling, phrases and punctuation rules.</p>