



# Exam Style Guide

**Subtitling into  
French (FR-FR)**



Ver 21.0723

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## Technical dimension

### T1. Video framerate

T1.1 All videos run at 25 frames per second (fps).

### T2. Line limitations

T2.1 42 characters per line (cpl).

T2.2 Maximum of 2 lines.

### T3. Font type

T3.1 Arial.

### T4. Font size

T4.1 Point 30.

### T5. Font color

T5.1 White.

### T6. Background

T6.1 Use a subtitle background to enhance the visibility of subtitles where appropriate.

### T7. Positioning

T7.1 Horizontal: center-aligned.

T7.2 Vertical: bottom of the screen.

T7.3 Subtitles should be moved to the top of the screen to avoid overlap with onscreen text or other important information contained in the images.

T7.4 In long opening credit sequences, avoid switching forth and back between bottom- and top-positioned subtitles and stick to the same position throughout the sequence as much as possible.

### T8. Maximum display rate

T8.1 15.0 characters per second (cps).

T8.2 The absolute maximum you are allowed to go is 17.0 cps, but only in a limited number of cases (see T8.3).

T8.3 If need be, up to a maximum of 10% of the subtitles in any given file can be over the reading-speed limit, that is, between 15.1 and 17.0, but remember that no display rate should be above 17.0 cps.

### T9. Minimum subtitle duration

T9.1 The minimum duration of a subtitle on screen is 16 frames.

### T10. Maximum subtitle duration

T10.1 The maximum duration of a subtitle on screen is 5 seconds.

T10.2 In exceptional cases only, e.g., for song lyrics, the maximum duration can be exceeded up to 7 seconds.

### T11. Minimum gap between subtitles

T11.1 Leave a minimum gap of 4 frames between subtitles.

### T12. Timing (see T14 Chaining subtitles)

T12.1 Subtitles should be timed to audio (within 3 frames).

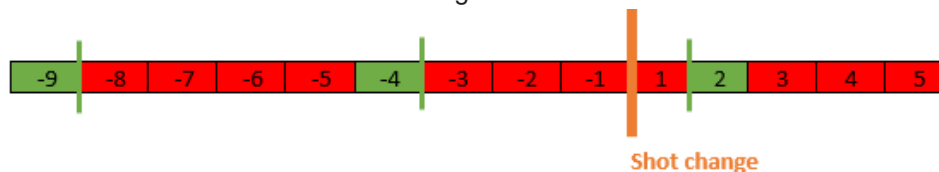
T12.2 If extra time is needed for the reading speed, the out-time can be extended by a maximum of 12 frames after the end of audio.

### T13. Spotting around shot changes

T13.1 Where dialogue starts on the shot change, or within 8 frames past the shot change, the in-time should be set to one frame after the shot change:



T13.2 If the out-time is within 8 frames before the shot change, the out-time should be extended to four frames before the shot change so that the last three frames before the actual shot change are free of subtitles:



### T14. Chaining subtitles

T14.1 In the case of consecutive subtitles, any gaps of 5 to 11 frames inclusive must be closed to 4 frames (chained subtitles). That is, the gap can be either 4 or a minimum of 12 frames.

### T15. Translator credit

T15.1 Add a final subtitle with the candidate number assigned to you so that your work can be easily identified.

## Linguistic dimension

### L1. Spelling

L1.1 The simplified spelling of the 1990 reform should be used:

*entraîner des après-midis un évènement*

L1.2 Capitals should be accentuated when necessary:

*À présent.*

### L2. Line treatment

L2.1 Line breaks, within and across subtitles, should be syntactically segmented, keeping linguistic units together.

L2.2 Text should normally be kept to one line unless it exceeds the character limitation.

L2.3 In some cases, to enhance readability, it may be justified to use two lines even if the text is shorter than 42 characters. For instance, to break up syntactical units when a subtitle consists of two or more phrases, to highlight rhyming patterns (e.g., poetry and songs) or to follow the line break of an onscreen message:

*À sa nouveauté  
tu verras sa beauté.*

L2.4 Avoid having long sentences run over more than 3 or 4 subtitles. If possible, try to merge subtitles together, or break the sentence into several, shorter units.

**L3. Abbreviations**

L3.1 The use of abbreviations should be avoided unless there are space or time limitations.

**L4. Symbols**

L4.1 A space should be left between a number and a symbol (except for the ° which has no space before but one after):

23 km      6 cm      56 kg      25° C

L4.2 The currency symbol comes after the number, with a space:

53 €      1 659 \$

**L5. Acronyms**

L5.1 Acronyms should be written without periods between letters:

FBI      BBC

**L6. Dual speakers**

L6.1 A hyphen followed by a space should be used to indicate two speakers in one subtitle, with a maximum of one speaker per line.

- John, tu es là ?  
- Oui, dans la cuisine.

L6.2 Always use the shorter hyphen (-), as opposed to the en- and em-dashes (\*- and \*—).

**L7. Italics**

- L7.1 Titles of albums, books, films and audiovisual productions.
- L7.2 Foreign words unless they are part of regular usage, scientific terms in Latin.
- L7.3 Dialogue that is heard through electronic media, such as a phone, television set or computer.
- L7.4 Song lyrics if plot pertinent and recited poems.
- L7.5 Voiceovers and off-screen narration, unless the large majority of the content consists of off-screen speech. Only use italics when the speaker is not in the scene(s), not merely off screen or off camera.
- L7.6 The voice of a visible character expressing unspoken thoughts or inner monologue.
- L7.7 Do not use italics to indicate emphasis on specific words.

**L8. Numbers**

L8.1 From 0 to 10, numbers should be written out, unless there are space or time limitations, in which case figures can be used:

un      cinq      dix

L8.2 From 11 and above, numbers should be written numerically:

13      23      37

L8.3 A space should be used to separate thousands:

1 521      63 000      12 256 395

L8.4 A comma should be used for decimals:

7,5 km

L8.5 Avoid starting a subtitle with a number. If necessary, write out the whole number:

Quinze hommes sont arrivés.

**L9. Time**

L9.1 Time should be transcribed as follows, with spaces:

04 h 30      16 h 30      12 h (ou midi)      24 h (ou minuit)

**L10. Dates**

L10.1 Dates must be expressed in the following format:

Elle est partie le 3 février 1975.

**L11. Currency and measurements**

L11.1 Do not convert currency unless required by the context.

L11.2 Convert measurements to the metric system, unless leaving the original units is required by the context/images, or there are instructions to keep the original units:

kilomètres (km)      degrés Celsius (° C)      kilogrammes (kg)

**L12. Hyphenation**

L12.1 Words should not be split over two lines with a hyphen unless the word is hyphenated.

**L13. Quotation marks**

L13.1 English or straight double quotation marks without spaces should be used: " ", rather than \* « ».

L13.2 Use double quotation marks without spaces when a character reads out or quotes someone else.

L13.3 Direct speech is introduced by a colon, followed by a space, double quotation marks and capital case:

Elle m'a dit : "Ça suffit !"

L13.4 The punctuation should be outside the quotation marks when individual words are quoted, but inside the quotation marks when the punctuation applies to the semantic content within:

Il n'arrête pas de dire "sensationnel".

Il aime dire : "C'est sensationnel !"

L13.5 Quotation marks should be used at the start and at the end of each subtitle if the quote carries over more than one subtitle:

Mon père me disait toujours :

"Il ne faut pas noyer la peau de l'ours"

"avant d'avoir vendu le poisson."

L13.6 Book chapters, articles and song titles should be in double quotation marks:

Il a chanté "Ne me quitte pas".

L13.7 Use double quotation marks without spaces for agrammatical phrases, neologisms, made-up expressions, and speech impediments or disorderly speech, if relevant for the plot, and when someone is imitating another person or placing special emphasis on a particular word or phrase.

L13.8 Do not use quotation marks within quotation marks.



#### L14. Continuity

- L14.1 Ellipsis (three dots) or dashes should not be used when an ongoing sentence is split between two or more continuous subtitles:

*Nous l'avons appelée  
mais elle n'était pas chez elle.*

#### L15. Continuity (interruptions)

- L15.1 Use ellipsis (three dots) to indicate interruptions:

*Il venait de partir quand...*

- L15.2 Use ellipsis to indicate a pause in the delivery of the original, an intentional or accidental suspension of a part of the sentence, or an abrupt interruption:

*Faut voir si... je vais y réfléchir.*

- L15.3 Use ellipsis, without a space, to indicate that a subtitle is starting mid-sentence, e.g., when a character turns on the radio:

*...n'en crut pas ses yeux.*

- L15.4 The ellipsis can be used when an utterance is interrupted by another character or by a forced narrative.

*Comme je vous le disais...*

*Attention, une bombe !*

*...c'est un quartier très calme.*

#### L16. Profanity and taboo language

- L16.1 The original content's dialogue must never be censored in the translated version. Expletives should be rendered as faithfully as possible, without using dialects or words that would otherwise introduce a level of obscenity not implied in the original dialogue.

#### L17. Titles

- L17.1 Titles of published works, existing movies and TV shows: if available, the official or well-known translations should be used. If none are available, titles should be left in the original language.
- L17.2 Capitalization of titles: only the first letter of the title should be capitalized:

*De grandes espérances      Le père Goriot*

#### L18. Songs

- L18.1 Songs are only subtitled if they are relevant for the plot or part of the film (e.g., a character performs a song).
- L18.2 If coinciding with dialogue, whatever is more plot-pertinent should be subtitled.
- L18.3 Lyrics should be italicized.
- L18.4 An uppercase letter should be used at the beginning of each line.
- L18.5 Commas and periods can be used within the lyric line, if necessary.
- L18.6 Only question marks and exclamation marks should be used at the end of a line, no commas or periods.

#### L19. Text on screen

- L19.1 Text on screen should be translated when it is relevant and not redundant, and does not coincide with dialogue. If there is simultaneous, plot-pertinent speech, and no time to accommodate both spoken and written text, subtitled the dialogue should be given priority.

- L19.2 The title of the programme should be in ALL CAPS.
- L19.3 Inserts (written narrative elements present in the programme) and titles (onscreen text added during post-production) should be in lowercase italics.

