



# Subtitling Style Guide

## Swedish (SV)



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**Technical dimension ..... 3**

T1. Video framerate .....	3
T2. Line limitations .....	3
T3. Text formatting .....	3
T4. Background .....	3
T5. Positioning .....	3
T6. Maximum display rate .....	3
T7. Minimum subtitle duration .....	3
T8. Maximum subtitle duration .....	3
T9. Minimum gap between subtitles .....	3
T10. Timing (see T12 Chaining subtitles) .....	3
T11. Spotting around shot changes .....	4
T12. Chaining subtitles.....	4

**Linguistic dimension ..... 4**

L1. Editing .....	4
L2. Line treatment .....	4
L3. Abbreviations .....	5
L4. Dual speakers .....	5
L5. Italics .....	5
L6. Numbers.....	5
L7. Time .....	6
L8. Currency and measurements.....	6
L9. Quotation marks.....	6
L10. Continuity .....	7
L11. Continuity (interruptions) .....	7
L12. Profanity and taboo language .....	7
L13. Titles.....	8
L14. Songs .....	8
L15. Text on screen .....	8

## 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. Text formatting

T3.1 Font type: Arial.

T3.2 Font size: point 30.

T3.3 Font colour: white

### T4. Background

T4.1 Use a subtitle background to enhance the visibility of subtitles where appropriate.

### T5. Positioning

T5.1 Horizontal: center-aligned.

T5.2 Vertical: bottom of the screen.

T5.3 Subtitles should be moved to the top of the screen to avoid overlap with onscreen text or other important information contained in the images.

T5.4 In long opening credit sequences and similar, avoid switching back and forth between bottom- and top-positioned subtitles and stick to the same position throughout the sequence as much as possible. In these cases, it is recommended to keep all subtitles aligned at the top.

### T6. Maximum display rate

T6.1 13.0 characters per second (cps).

T6.2 The absolute maximum you are allowed to go is 15.0 cps, but only in a limited number of cases (see T6.3).

T6.3 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 13.1 and 15.0, but remember that no display rate should be 15.1 cps or above.

### T7. Minimum subtitle duration

T7.1 The absolute minimum duration of a subtitle on screen is 1 second. This should be reserved for single word subtitles.

### T8. Maximum subtitle duration

T8.1 The maximum duration of a subtitle on screen is 8 seconds.

T8.2 In exceptional cases, e.g. for song lyrics or on-screen text with longer duration, the maximum duration can be exceeded, but if possible, it should be avoided.

### T9. Minimum gap between subtitles

T9.1 Leave a minimum gap of 2 frames between subtitles.

### T10. Timing (see T12 Chaining subtitles)

T10.1 Subtitle in-cues should be timed to audio (within 3 frames).

T10.2 Out-cues should ideally be timed about half a second after the end of the audio, if possible, with reading speed, shot changes and other circumstances taken into consideration.

T10.3 If extra time is needed for the reading speed, the out-cue can be extended by a maximum of one second after the end of audio.

**T11. Spotting around shot changes**

- T11.1 In-cues should be either on the first frame after the shot change or 12 frames before or after the shot change.
- T11.2 Out-cues should be either two frames before the shot change or 12 frames before or after the shot change.
- T11.3 Where dialogue starts within 12 frames after the shot change, the in-cue should be timed to the first frame after the shot change.
- T11.4 Where dialogue starts more than 5 frames before the shot-change, the in-cue should be timed to 12 frames before the shot change.
- T11.5 If the out-cue is within 12 frames before the shot change after reading speed has been taken into consideration, the out-cue should be extended to two frames before the shot change. (This rule trumps T11.3, meaning that the out-cue can in this case be extended for more than one second after the end of the audio.)

**T12. Chaining subtitles**

T12.1 In the case of consecutive subtitles, any gaps of 3 to 11 frames inclusive must be closed to 2 frames (chained subtitles). That is, the gap can be either 2 or a minimum of 12 frames – but with the above in mind, it is often a good idea to close gaps up to a second.

## Linguistic dimension

**L1. Editing**

- L1.1 Dialogue should be condensed to improve readability while keeping important information and nuances intact. This is paramount in subtitling.
- L1.2 Established names and repetitions can be removed for readability, but could sometimes be kept for clarity:

But why on earth did you ever think that, Ana?  
 ↓  
 Hur kunde du tro det?

A crowd chanting:

Stop the war! Stop the war! Stop the war! Stop the war!  
 ↓  
 Stoppa kriget! Stoppa kriget!

L1.3 Note that repetitions aren't wrong per se.

**L2. Line treatment**

- L2.1 Text should normally be kept to one line unless it exceeds the character limitation.
- L2.2 Line breaks, within and across subtitles, should be syntactically segmented, keeping linguistic units together.
- 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:

*Allt var en dimma.  
När började han rimma?*

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

### L3. Abbreviations

- L3.1 The use of abbreviations should be avoided unless there are space or time limitations.
- L3.2 Abbreviated titles are written in lower-case and without a full stop, i.e., *dr*, *mr*, *ms*, *miss* and *mrs*.
- L3.3 Foreign titles like “miss”, “señor” and “madame” are kept in their respective languages if they can be assumed to be well-known to the audience.
- L3.4 Measurements can be abbreviated where appropriate.

### L4. Dual speakers

- L4.1 Use hyphens, without a space, to indicate two speakers in one subtitle:

*-Hur verkar vädret i dag?  
-Det ser ut att bli soligt.*

- L4.2 Always use the shorter hyphen (-), as opposed to the en- and em-dashes (\*- and \*-).

### L5. Italics

- L5.1 Titles of albums, plays, books, movies and other works of art.
- L5.2 Foreign words unless they are part of regular usage.
- L5.3 Dialogue that is heard through electronic media, such as a phone, television set or computer, or through any other devices that modify the original voice of a character, such as a voice changer device.
- L5.4 Voiceovers and off-screen narration.
- L5.5 When the speaker is not in the scene. (Not merely off screen or off camera.)
- L5.6 In documentaries, reserve the italics for strict narration. Interviewees should not be italicized each time they are off camera.
- L5.7 The voice of a visible character expressing unspoken thoughts, flashbacks or inner monologue.

### L6. Numbers

- L6.1 From 0 to 12, numbers should normally be written out, unless there are space or time limitations, in which case figures can be used. For exact measurements, numbers are preferred:

*Det satt elva pilfinkar på fönsterkarmen.*

BUT

*Mät upp 8 cl gin.*

- L6.2 From 13 and above, numbers should normally be written numerically. Inexact amounts should still be written out:

*Det gick 23 elever i klassen.*

BUT

*Det var säkert hundra labradorer på brukshundsträffen.*

## L7. Time

L7.1 Use a full stop for times:

19.35 02.45

L7.2 In informal contexts, time can also be expressed in letters:

Hon släntrade in framåt tresnåret.

AND

Då ses vi klockan sex!

BUT for more exact times:

Vi ses kl 18.30.

L7.3 Note that "klockan" can be abbreviated to "kl".

## L8. Currency and measurements

L8.1 Do not convert currencies.

L8.2 Convert measurements to the metric and centigrade systems, unless leaving the original units is required by the context/images, or there are instructions to keep the original units.

## L9. Quotation marks

L9.1 Straight double quotation marks should be used: " ", rather than « », „ “ or ” .

L9.2 Swedish standards for quotes are used. For example, whole sentences are quoted like this:

Han sa: "Det här ställer jag inte upp på."

OR

"Det här ställer jag inte upp på", sa han.

Note that the full stop is part of the quote and should be kept within the quote, but removed when there is a comma after the closing quotation mark.

L9.3 If not a whole sentence, the punctuation should not be part of the quote:

Han kallade dem för "vildvittror".

L9.4 If a quote carries over more than one subtitle, quotation marks should be used at the beginning and at the end of each subtitle and the continuation dash or ellipsis should be placed outside the quote:

"Han kom som ett yrväder en aprilafton"-

-"och hade ett höganäskrus  
i en svångrem om halsen."

L9.5 Book chapters, articles and song titles should be in double quotation marks:

"How beautiful you are" med The Cure  
är en rackarns bra låt.

L9.6 Use double quotation marks for ungrammatical phrases, neologisms, made-up expressions and similar if relevant for the plot, and when someone is imitating another person.



- L9.7 When using quotation marks within other quotation marks, use single quotation marks ( ' ') within double quotation marks ( " "):

Hon frågade: "Var det 'jordgubbar' du sa?"

## L10. Continuity

- L10.1 When an ongoing sentence is split between two or more consecutive subtitles, hyphens should be used if the subtitles are chained, i.e., if there is just a minimum gap of 2 frames between them. No commas are used before continuation hyphens:

Det var ju oväntat-

-att springa på dig här mitt i natten.

AND

Jag köpte aubergine, pomelo-

-mandlar, apelsinjuice och kanel.

- L10.2 If there is more than a minimum gap between them, ellipses (three dots) should be used instead:

Det var ju oväntat...

(PAUSE)

...att springa på dig här mitt i natten.

## L11. Continuity (interruptions)

- L11.1 Use an ellipsis (three dots) to indicate abrupt interruptions:

Jag minns faktiskt inte vad jag...

- L11.2 Use an ellipsis without spaces to indicate a pause in the delivery of the original, an intentional or accidental suspension of a part of the sentence:

Det där var...en osmaklig kommentar.

- L11.3 Use an ellipsis without a space to indicate that a subtitle is starting mid-sentence, e.g., when a character turns on the radio:

...klart till halvklart.

- L11.4 The ellipsis can be used when an utterance is interrupted by another character or by a forced narrative:

Det här med att köra bil...

Akta cyklisten!

...var ju inte så svårt.

## L12. Profanity and taboo language

- L12.1 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. This doesn't mean that every expletive must be reflected in the translation, but that the tone should be the same.

### L13. Titles

- L13.1 Use official or well-known translations of titles of published works, movies and TV shows. If none is available, use the original title. For fictional titles, use your best judgement.
- L13.2 Capitalization of titles: only the first letter of the title should be capitalized.

### L14. Songs

- L14.1 Songs are only subtitled if they are relevant for the plot or part of the film (e.g., a character performs a song).
- L14.2 The usual rules for italics apply. That is, lyrics shouldn't be italicized on the merit of just being lyrics.
- L14.3 For lyrics, no full stops and no continuation dashes are used. Normal capitalization rules apply:

Men himlen plötsligt full av moln,  
som svampar upp ur marken

Skuggor växer fort i natt  
En kall eld drar omkull er

- L14.4 Note that a comma should not be used at the end of a lyric subtitle, so if these lyrics are split into four subtitles:

Men himlen plötsligt full av moln  
som svampar upp ur marken

Skuggor växer fort i natt  
En kall eld drar omkull er

### L15. Text on screen

- L15.1 Text on screen should be translated when it is relevant and not redundant, and does not coincide with dialogue. Onscreen text becomes redundant when spelling is identical in both languages.
- L15.2 If there is simultaneous, plot-pertinent speech, and no time to accommodate both spoken and written text, subtitling the dialogue should be given priority.
- L15.3 Text on screen should be in ALL CAPS, except for written passages (e.g., excerpts from books, magazines or newspapers, handwritten notes, social media messages and text messages), which should match the use of uppercase/lowercase as it appears on screen.
- L15.4 To improve readability, sentence case can be used for long passages of onscreen text (e.g., long written passages used as prologue or epilogue).

For any linguistic or technical aspects not covered in this style guide, please refer to Medietextarna's guidelines for subtitling ([www.medietextarna.se/riktlinjer](http://www.medietextarna.se/riktlinjer)) and *Svenska skrivregler*, in that order.