

**NCRA Captioning Community of Interest**

**Realtime Broadcast Captioning:  
Recommended Style and Format Guidelines  
For U.S. Programming**

**NCRA  
Captioning Community of Interest**



**Realtime Broadcast Captioning:**



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## Realtime Broadcast Captioning: Recommended Style and Format Guidelines For U.S. Programming

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# NCRA Captioning Community of Interest

## Realtime Broadcast Captioning: Recommended Style and Format Guidelines For U.S. Programming

### *Mission Statement*

The purpose of this publication is to serve as a reference source for recommended style and formatting guidelines for realtime captioners in the United States of America. The material found in this manual is the product of the National Court Reporters Association (NCRA) Captioning Community of Interest (COI).

The goal of this manual is to assist the independent realtime captioner by identifying and providing, through example, captioning style and formatting guidelines to create a more homogeneous product for the caption-viewing audiences in the United States. This manual will only address “realtime” broadcast captioners, both steno and voice, and does not apply to “offline” or “post-production” captioning. Although “realtime” and “offline” captioners do share many of the same concerns and style dilemmas, this manual will only address concerns specific to realtime captioning. For individuals interested in style and format recommendations for “offline” captioning, please refer to the Caption Key document created by the Captioned Media Program (CMP) of the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) with funds for publication provided by the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education. This document can be found on the NAD Web site and the WGBH Web site. The current link to download the offline captioning key is <http://www.cfv.org/capagency.asp>.

Most captioning companies have already established their own captioning guidelines for their employees and independent contractors. This manual is not intended to usurp the direction provided by any established company. The direction provided by the company you are working for should take precedence over any instruction provided in this manual. However, this manual is meant to serve as a guideline of suggestions for those independent captioners who have questions on formatting and for those individuals who may not have attended a comprehensive Captioner Training Program (CTP).

Therefore, the target audience for this manual may consist of:

- Freelance and Official Court Reporters who are transitioning into a captioning career on their own without the benefit of a training program.
- Captioners in training with a mentor or apprenticeship program.
- Independent contractor or freelance realtime captioners who have questions on the proper formatting or preferred style guidelines.
- A resource and validation for working captioners who need a refresher in the basic formatting style guidelines.

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#### *Know Your Audience*

Hearing loss ranges from mild to profound. The distinctions between the terms "deaf," "Deaf," "deafened," and "hard-of-hearing" are based principally on the individual's preferred language (spoken or sign) rather than on the actual degree of hearing loss. Deaf, deafened, and hard-of-hearing individuals may use hearing aids, cochlear implants, or other assistive listening devices.<sup>1</sup>

#### Useful Definitions

**deaf:** This term is generally used to describe individuals with a severe to profound hearing loss, with little or no residual hearing. Some deaf people use sign language, such as American Sign Language (ASL) or Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ), to communicate. Others use speech to communicate using their residual hearing and hearing aids, technical devices or cochlear implants, and/or speechreading.

**culturally Deaf:** This term refers to individuals who identify with and participate in the language, culture and community of Deaf people, based on sign language. Deaf culture does not perceive hearing loss and deafness from a pathological point of view but rather from a socio-cultural point of view, indicated by a capital "D" as in "Deaf culture." Culturally Deaf people may also use speech, residual hearing, hearing aids, speechreading and gesturing to communicate with people who do not sign.

**deafened or late-deafened:** These terms describe individuals who grow up hearing or hard-of-hearing and, either suddenly or gradually, experience a profound loss of hearing. Late-deafened adults usually cannot understand speech without visual clues such as captioning/computerized notetaking, speechreading or sign language.

**hard-of-hearing:** This term is generally used to describe individuals who use spoken language (their residual hearing and speech) to communicate. Most hard-of-hearing people can understand some speech sounds with or without hearing aids and often supplement their residual hearing with speechreading, hearing aids and technical devices. The term "person with hearing loss" is increasingly used and preferred.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Deaf Culture**

Culture results from a group of people coming together to form a community around shared experience, common interests, shared norms of behavior, and shared survival techniques. Such groups as the deaf seek each other out for social interaction and emotional support.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Hearing Audiences**

Realtime broadcast captioning has traditionally been used by the deaf and hard-of-hearing to allow viewers to read what is being spoken. In addition to this core audience, viewers who benefit from realtime captioning include those learning English as a second language; children learning to read or improving their reading skills; patrons of restaurants, bars, health clubs, airports or other public facilities who are not able to hear the TV audio due to background noise; anyone living in a noisy area such as near a busy street; and anyone wishing to view a program without using audio.

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Hearing Society [www.chs.ca/info/access/busguide/eng2.html](http://www.chs.ca/info/access/busguide/eng2.html)

<sup>2</sup> ASL Info [ASLinfo.com](http://ASLinfo.com)

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#### *Hardware*

In addition to a desktop or notebook computer and a steno machine, a captioner will need a modem to caption broadcast programming. In order to communicate with a station's encoder, a 56k or lower speed external serial modem is recommended, such as a U.S. Robotics 33.6k Faxmodem. The baud rate must be bumped down to 1200 or 2400 in Windows Modem and Phone options or in the captioning software modem settings. Advanced settings should be set to the following:

Data Bits: 8  
Parity: None  
Stop Bits: 1  
Modulation: Standard

If instructed, some encoders require the following settings:

Data Bits: 7  
Parity: Odd  
Stop Bits: 1  
Modulation: Standard

Although USB external modems are available, it is not recommended that they be used. Likewise, an external serial modem connected via serial to USB adaptor may cause problems with some software. Check with your software vendor for specific recommendations. The majority of computers manufactured today do not have serial ports. Therefore, it may be necessary to have one or two ports installed, one for your writer and one for the modem. A PCMCIA card, such as the Socket Serial I/O Card or Dual Ports Card, or a docking station may be used with notebook computers to add a serial port to the configuration.

Internal modems may be used as a backup measure; however, it is not recommended for everyday captioning, especially for audio-only programming, because the captioner does not have the benefit of flashing lights to indicate connectivity.

Due to ever-changing technology, slower external modems may be difficult to find. There are distributors that sell them new, used, and refurbished. An Internet search or a trip to your local electronics store may be sufficient. eBay, or other online auction sites, is another viable option. Internet encoders eventually will eliminate the need for modems; however, unless and until broadcasters switch their system setups, modems are here to stay.

A captioner's office should also include backup power in the event of a power outage. All necessary captioning components should be plugged into the device. A couple of examples of recommended backup power sources are APC Back-UPS or a generator. A captioner can expect backup power to last from ten minutes to an hour or more, enough time to secure coverage for the remainder of a program.

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It is recommended but not necessary to have two television sets, one with the captions turned on and one with the captions turned off. This setup will allow the captioner to view any graphics, open captions, Chyrons, etc., that may be blocked by the closed captions. One of the sets should have a headphone jack and necessary connections for cable and/or satellite inputs/outputs.

Oftentimes, a captioner may have to caption a program out of his or her viewing market. A listen-only number will be provided. The captioner will need an audio system connected to a landline with a headphone jack. Depending on the audio system chosen, an amplifier, stereo receiver, or equalizer may be necessary. The following are some of the audio systems available on the market:

- Gentner Hybrid Coupler (requires amplifier) (no longer manufactured)
- CircuitWerkes TelTap
- Comrex Telephone Coupler TCB-1
- Phone Amplifying System such as HelloDirect or Plantronics
- Marantz PMD201 Cassette Recorder
- Corded Phone with Headset

Depending on the company or companies a captioner obtains work from, an office setup may include one or all of the following video sources:

- Cable
- Digital Cable
- Small Satellite Dish
- Big Satellite Dish

Finally, a good, quality set of headphones is essential to a captioner's office setup. Depending on the audio system selected, an adaptor may be necessary for the correct headphone jack size.

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#### *Captioning Definitions*

**Online (realtime) captioning** is used primarily for live broadcasts, such as news, entertainment programs and sporting events. This style of captioning requires a skilled steno machine writer or voicewriter with a Total Accuracy Rate of over 98% and may be performed at speeds up to and possibly exceeding 300 wpm.

**Off-line (pop-on) captioning** is used primarily for movies or episodic productions where turnaround times or delivery schedules allow. This style of captioning is more laborious and requires anywhere from eight to ten hours to produce one hour of off-line captioning. This allows for synchronizing the captions with time code and for extensive editing of the script.

**Post Display (3-line roll-up)** is a style of captioning that is being utilized more and more by broadcasters and production houses in order to facilitate fast turnaround delivery schedules without compromising the accuracy or presentation of the closed captioning. Post Display is done in an off-line captioning environment having the captioner produce a caption file from a recording of the program. A caption facilitator then dials in to the broadcaster's encoder and audio coupler and coordinates the sending of the caption file with the VTR operator and creates a captioned sub master.

**Timed Roll-up** is used for pre-taped programming. These captions can be timed to be synchronized with the audio portion of a program.

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#### *Slang/Poor Grammar*

In captioning, it is acceptable to write slang or poor grammar, and it is sometimes even necessary in order to truly convey the flavor or what has been said. However, it is possible to overdo it, writing every instance of poor grammar or lazy speech. For example, “gonna” vs. “going to,” “runnin’” vs. “running,” and “shouldn’t of” vs. “shouldn’t have.”

It is common to write what you hear when captioning song lyrics, particularly rap or hip-hop, where you will often hear things such as “doin’,” “workin’,” etc. In this case, writing what you hear helps convey the flavor of the lyrics.

Some captioning companies have written guidelines to help the captioner with these decisions. It is best to check with your captioning company for guidance.

#### *Personal Views*

As the captioner your duty is to caption what is said, editing where necessary for clarity, translation, or brevity. While you may hear something during a broadcast that offends you or that you personally disagree with, it still remains your duty to caption what is said. For example, if you are captioning a political roundtable talk show, and the person speaking has political views that differ from yours, it is not acceptable to edit or drop any of his remarks where your opinion differs from his. Likewise, if someone uses a word in a way that offends you, such as “God” or “Lord” used as an exclamation, or furthermore uses acceptable language that might be considered offensive, such as “ass” or “jackass,” it again is not acceptable to edit or drop this word.

Again, it is recommended that you check with your captioning company for guidance.

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#### *Troubleshooting*

Scenario #1: Hardware – Steno Machine to Computer:

You don't have power to your writer or you are not receiving steno to the computer.

- ❖ Look upstream from your writer. Is the steno machine on? Is it plugged in? Is the power strip on? Has your power supply died or your battery run down? Do you have power to the wall outlet?
- ❖ Look downstream from your writer. Is the port on your writer working? How about the cable, any damage? Is your writer in realtime mode? Pins in good shape? Is your RT cable seated properly and tight? Is your computer port working? Do you know which COM port you're using?
- ❖ Is your port replicator working? Is it plugged in? Does it have a reset function? Is the port replicator cable in good working order? How about the port on the replicator?
- ❖ Are you using a PCMCIA serial card? Are the drivers installed? What COM port are you using? Is your computer seeing the device? Are the connection points well seated and tight? Do you have any reason to question that PCMCIA slot?
- ❖ Is your wireless device working? Are the drivers installed? Are you using the assigned USB port? Is the computer seeing the device? Is that USB port working? Are other wireless devices being used: Pocket PC, Palm Pilot, cell phone?

Scenario #2: Modem issues:

You can't dial or your modem is not connecting.

- ❖ Look upstream from your modem. Is the modem plugged in? Is the cable in good shape? Is the modem turned on? Is the phone line plugged into both the modem and the wall jack? Are you sure the phone jack is working? Are you sure that you have phone service – is there a dial tone? Long distance service, too? Is there excessive noise on the line? Is the physical phone line in good shape, plastic end connected on both ends?
- ❖ Phone card charged with minutes? Phone card numbers valid and correctly dialed? Did you add commas as a pause when needed? An issue with the number string in your phone book? Phone card company still honoring your card? Are you dialing from a phone that requires you to dial an 8 or 9 to get an outside line? Have you tried 10-10 numbers?
- ❖ Is there an encoder compatibility issue? Does the encoder answer the call from your modem? Is your modem initializing/talking to the encoder? Are your send/receive lights

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flashing? Do you have send/receive lights on your modem? Does resetting or turning the modem off and then on again resolve the issue? Are the “handshake” tones normal? Does your backup modem work? Do other captioners have the same issue on the same station?

- ❖ Look downstream from your modem. Is the modem connected to your computer? Check the cable/cord. Is the modem itself working? Lights on? Internal vs. external? Do you need to disable a modem if you have multiple modems on your computer? Are you trying to use a USB connection/converter? Do you know which COM port is assigned to which modem? Does the computer recognize the modem? Are the modem drivers loaded? Can you ping the modem? Does the software recognize the modem? Are the modem speed settings in your software and the modem speed settings in Windows conflicting? Are you getting a dial tone while in your software? Do you have the correct modem selected in your software? Do you have the proper or a compatible encoder selected in your software settings? Is there a parity issue?

Scenario #3: Modem issues:

You can't stay connected to the encoder.

- ❖ Look downstream from your phone jack. Is there excessive noise on the line? Rain, flooding or other weather issues? Construction or phone line work going on nearby? Have you changed carriers? Is it an issue with how the carrier is routing your call?
- ❖ If using a phone card, is the company still honoring your card? Are they monitoring for non-permitted usage? Is your long distance carrier doing the same? Did you pay your phone bill on time?
- ❖ Look upstream from your phone jack. Is your jack in good shape? How about the phone line between your indoor jack to the phone company's equipment? Does the RJ-11 (plastic phone end) connector seat properly and snugly? Is the phone line from the jack to the modem in working order? Is there an encoder compatibility issue? (See Scenario #2 for further compatibility questions.)
- ❖ If you have call waiting, voice mail messaging, or other services on your data line, have you disabled them?
- ❖ Do you have the correct encoder selected in your software? Is there a parity issue with data transfer speed, flow control, protocols, compression or modulation?

Scenario #4: Modem issues:

Master Control is seeing either no captions, garbled captions or captions are freezing, spitting or hanging up.

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- ❖ Look downstream from your computer. Was your pre-air check successful? Are your captions clean in your preview window? Is there an issue with your software modem speed vs. modem speed setting in Windows? Are the send/receive lights indicating the captions are reaching the encoder? Did a blank-and-pass command correct the problem? Did resetting the encoder help? How about starting a new realtime file? Is there excessive noise on the line? Is there a compatibility issue between your modem and the encoder? Have you checked your parity settings and software encoder selection? Are other captioners having the same issues? Does your backup modem work?
- ❖ Are you able to see the program on your television and are the captions garbled on your TV screen?
- ❖ Look upstream from your computer. Is your writer trying to save blocks of strokes to RAM or a disk?
- ❖ Do you have programs running in the background – screen savers, sleep mode, backup systems, antivirus programs, spyware, Internet?
- ❖ Is RAM on your computer's hard drive sufficient?

It is recommended that you keep important phone numbers at hand and/or programmed into your phone or cell phone, i.e., captioning software vendor support, captioning companies you provide services to, other captioners you can contact to relieve you if you cannot resolve technical issues, Master Control of stations you caption, computer manufacturer technical support, etc.

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#### *Realtime Skills for Captioning*

##### **Use Prefixes, Root Words and Suffixes**

The goal is to strive for clean, accurate captions with the confidence of one's dictionary and writing style. In order to achieve an over 99% accuracy rate, a good place to start is to examine one's steno theory and to modify it such that each and every stroke is uniquely defined. In other words, avoid using a single stroke in multiple circumstances. For example, if the stroke PWAOEU is defined as BUY, then avoid using that stroke as a prefix or suffix. Create a unique stroke to use in those situations. Likewise, a stroke such as OR should never be used as anything but the word OR. Adopting this philosophy will greatly reduce the risk for word-boundary issues.

Prefixes and suffixes play an enormous role in captioning. One of the first steps of transitioning from court reporter to realtime writer and/or captioner is distinguishing between prefixes and suffixes. Although one may encounter few word-boundary problems while court reporting, they seem to be ever present in captioning unless the necessary changes are made to one's writing.

Many court reporters use, for example, AOEU for both prefixes and suffixes and thought if they globalized the stroke with another stroke, all would be fine. Obviously, that is one of the great misconceptions of realtime writing. You cannot simply global your way out of any situation. Captioning is really about writing your way out of any situation, using prefixes, root words, suffixes, special characters such as the delete space and space functions, as well as fingerspelling.

##### **Conflicts**

Before Computer-Aided Transcription (CAT) was invented, court reporters rarely concerned themselves with conflicts. It was up to the typist to know the correct spelling based on the context of the sentence. However, with the advent of CAT, most software vendors have created artificial intelligence to assist the court reporter in making guesses at selections or displaying both/all options to be chosen during the editing process. While this is extremely innovative and convenient, it is frankly not good enough for captioners to rely on. Therefore, it is important to resolve all conflicts. Of course, we know about the obvious conflicts like BREAK and BRAKE, but we must also consider conflicts that are created from misstrokes as well as stacking. For example, **TPHR** could be IN, FROM, or THERE. It will likely become necessary for a captioner to change strokes learned early on to resolve these types of conflicts. For example, a common misstroke of **WHR** (WHETHER) for **WH** (WHEN) could be resolved by writing out **WHEN** (WHEPB) and defining **WH** as WHETHER. Stacking presents a whole new set of problems. **THAS** (THAT IS) is a very common stack for **-S THAT** as in HATS THAT (HAT THAT IS). A solution would be to define **THAS** as **-S THAT**. Keep in mind, when you write realtime at high rates of speed, your stacking may increase.

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#### Limit Briefs and Phrases

The next step to achieving the necessary accuracy rate is to limit the use of briefs and phrases thereby writing them out. Instead of **SAF** for SATISFY, either write it out or insert an asterisk into the original stroke. The asterisk, while foreign to many court reporters, can be a valuable tool in realtime. If you find it awkward to stroke the asterisk within another stroke, use the *half tap* method. To use the same example, stroke **SAF** and, while holding down the keys, simply reach over with your index finger to the asterisk key and press it down. After some practice, it will come more naturally, but there are some strokes where the index finger just isn't available and the *half tap* comes in handy. The primary reason to write out briefs and phrases is to avoid them appearing in a multistroke word if that word is either not in your dictionary or one of the strokes is misstroked. TETRACYCLINE could translate as AT THE TIME RA PSYCH LEAN. A much cleaner mistake would be TETRA PSYCHLINE (using a **RA** suffix and **LINE** suffix).

There is much controversy swirling around the field about briefs. Some writers believe briefing as much as possible will increase your speed. That general premise is indisputable on its face. However, others believe briefing as much as possible will not increase your accuracy as a captioner. If you strive to write 99% or better every day on any type of programming, it is the opinion of many seasoned captioners that a solid realtime theory devised of prefixes, suffixes, and root words is the best approach to consistent, accurate captions. One must *first* be *capable* of writing anything and everything without relying on briefs, artificial intelligence, or any other shortcut that may be invented in the next century. Once that happens, then briefs and some basic intelligence can be used as a tool, not a crutch.

#### Know your Dictionary

Changing your writing is only half the battle. It is imperative that you remember how you changed your writing. Make use of Post-It notes (or cheat sheets) anywhere and everywhere until you have memorized the new theory. Review transcripts and steno notes often for errors; keep lists of problem areas. Purge your dictionary of word-global entries; for example, if you have the word-global entry MARTIAL ARTS with the steno **PHAR/SHAUL**, which you have defined alone as MARSHALL, create a new and unique way to write MARTIAL, such as **PHAR/SHEUL**, and delete the word-global (crutch) entry. Practice writing sentences with the different MARSHALLS in them, including MARSHAL (**PHAR/SHAL**). Before you know it, you will "hear" MARTIAL instead of MARSHALL. It helps to visualize it.

It is important that you know what is in your dictionary. If a word or name is spoken and you are not confident it is in your dictionary, it is recommended you fingerspell the word until you can check your dictionary at a break. It is not recommended that you stroke words or names out in the hopes that they are in your dictionary.

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#### Delete Space and Space

Realtime writing requires the use of manually inserting a space and/or a delete space to achieve the desired result and to avoid word-boundary issues.

That groundball play was the best we've seen in this game.  
[GROUND delete space BALL]

He used a bass net to catch the fish.  
[BASS space NET; otherwise it may have translated as BASSINET]

#### Root Words and Inflected Endings

There exists a philosophy in captioning whereby coming back for inflected endings will decrease your chance for untranslates. Those inflected endings are -S, -D, and -G. The idea is that there is a better chance of a root word residing in your dictionary than there is that root word in the plural or past-tense form as well as any other suffix. While it may be easier to write the word STOPPING in one stroke, **STOP-G**, if you retrain yourself to always come back for the inflected ending, then it will pay off on the occasion when another word+inflected ending is not in your dictionary.

Another benefit of this principle is cleaner, more accurate captions. An example where coming back for inflected endings will result in cleaner captions is with the words MEAN, MEANS, MEANING, and MEANINGS if you attempt to write them all in one stroke. After all, wasn't that the goal in court reporting school? If you begin coming back for the inflected endings, you will decrease your chances to misstroke the intended word which resulted in one of the other words. Now, this means coming back twice for -INGS, **PHAOEPB/-G/-S**. That may seem burdensome, but after some time and practice, it's as easy to write as one stroke. That will allow you to reglobal -GS, which may be defined as -INGS, to simple -S, as many writers frequently misstroke plural -S with -GS.

Once you master this principle, you may begin to stroke some otherwise one-stroke names in two strokes, such as **SKWRAEUPL/-S** and **SKWROEPB/-S**, James and Jones respectively, which you will then need to add to your dictionary.

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#### *Dictionary Building*

Any and all information required for a captioning dictionary can be found by searching the Internet ([www.google.com](http://www.google.com), e.g.). Or you can purchase dictionary building software: Dictionary Jumpstart 1-866-648-JUMP, [www.dictionaryjumpstart.com](http://www.dictionaryjumpstart.com), OR CATapult, [www.CRRBooks.com](http://www.CRRBooks.com).

After obtaining the following types of information, enter the names into a Captioning job dictionary or your main dictionary. Be sure to enter odd-spelling names together *and* to have a unique way of writing the odd part of the name (example: MARTHA STEWART → **PHAR/THA\*STAOURT** can be globalized as MARTHA STEWART, and **STAO\*URT** can be globalized as STEWART to distinguish it from STUART. Or COURTENY COX → **KORT/TPH\*EU KOBGZ** can be globalized as COURTENY COX, and **KOERT/TPH\*EU** can be globalized as COURTENY to distinguish it from COURTNEY. When COURTENY or MS. STEWART are mentioned without COX and MARTHA respectively, they need to be written the unique way to achieve the correct spelling.

- Animals, especially dog breeds
- Automobiles and motorcycle names (makes and models)
- CEOs of major corporations, especially those under indictment or involved in scandals
- Countries, continents, and major international cities
- Current administration, including President, First Lady, President's family members, Vice President, Vice President's family members, White House spokesman and cabinet members
- Election candidates, including unknown or unpopular Presidential candidates
- Fashion designers
- Flowers, plants, and trees
- Foods, herbs and spices, wines, liquors, and beverages
- Governors, mayors of major cities
- Holidays and holiday terms
- Hurricanes (past and present)
- List of major political figures
- Major U.S. counties
- Members of U.S. Congress and the Senate
- Notorious figures, such as serial killers and mobsters and people involved in political scandals
- Oceans, rivers, lakes, mountain ranges, islands, volcanoes, etc.
- Past and current U.S. Vice Presidents
- Past U.S. Presidents
- Professional sports team names, including mascots, venues, and team nicknames (enter in sports dictionary)
- Supreme Court justices
- Top entertainers (past and present), actors, musicians, TV personalities, models, reality TV "stars," comedians, popular TV shows and their characters, top movie titles

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- Top professional sports figures (NBA, NFL, MLB, NHL, PGA, LPGA, NASCAR), including coaches, general managers, and owners (enter in sports dictionary)
- U.S. states and their major cities (need briefs for all the states)
- World leaders (past and present)
- Zodiac signs

While building your dictionary will take quite some time to complete, it is recommended you focus on modifying your steno theory first. After all, if you build your dictionary first and then change the way you write second, you will have no choice but to go back through your dictionary and change those entries you've recently entered. Making theory changes is the first step. Implementing the changes with consistency may take months or even years. Dictionary building is an ongoing process and ought to continue well after going on the air.

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#### *Obscenities and Sensitive Words*

**WARNING: The following chapter contains obscene and offensive words.  
This is necessary to convey necessary information to captioners.**

#### Obscenities Permitted on Some Shows

Create an obscenities job dictionary and only load on certain shows, such as talk shows, music video channels, pay channels, etc. In your main dictionary, the steno for obscenities should be defined as a clean word and fingerspelled if used in a news report, for example.

Word	Suggested Steno in Obscenities dict.	Steno In Main Dict. defined as
ass	A*RS	AS, AE*US, A*S, 5-S, 5*S, 5EUS, 5E*US = <b>as, as-, or -as</b>
asses	A*RS -S	ASZ, AE*USZ, A*SZ, 5-SZ, 5*SZ, 5EUSZ, 5E*USZ = <b>as, as- or -as</b>
bitch	PW*EUFP	PWEUFP, PWEUPBLG, PW*EUFP, PW*EUPBLG, 3WEU67, 3W*EU67, PWAOEUFP, PWAOEUPBLG, PWAO*EUFP, PWAO*EUPBLG, 3WA0EU67, 3WA0*EU67, PWEUT/-FP, PWEUT/*-FP = <b>bridge</b>  <i>(Add one-stroke entries as necessary e.g. PWEUFPS = bridges)</i>
bitches bitching		
boob	PWAO*B	PWAOB, PWAO*B, 3W50B, 3W50*B = <b>Bob</b>
boobs	PWAO*BS or /S	PWAOBS, PWAO*BS, 3W50BS, 3W50*BS = <b>bobs</b>
cock cocks (see pg. 35)	<b>N/A</b>	KO*BG = <b>cock</b> KO*BG/S = <b>cocks</b> as in <b>cocks a gun</b> KOBG = <b>cook</b> KOBGS = <b>Cox</b> KOBG/S = <b>cooks</b>
Dick	N/A	TKEUBG = <b>Dick</b> as in a name <i>Use judgment; e.g., if KICK trans as DICK often, may need to write DICK with asterisk</i>
fag	TPA*G	TPAG, TPA*G, TPAEUG, TPA*EUG, 235G, 235*G, 235EUG, 235*EUG = <b>tag</b>
fart	TPA*RT	TPART, TPA*RT, TPAEURT, TPA*EURT, 235R9, 235*R9 = <b>part</b>
farts	TPA*RTS or /S	TPARTS, TPA*RTS, TPAEURTS, TPA*EURTS, 235R9S, 235*R9S = <b>parts</b>
gay	TKPWA*EU	TKPWAEU, TKPWA*EU, 2K3W5EU, 2K3W5*EU = <b>guy</b>
gays	TKPWA*EUS or /S	TKPWAEUS, TKPWA*EUS, 2K3W5EUS, 2K3W5*EUS = <b>guys</b>
hell	HE*L	HEL = <b>hel or held</b>
kike	KAO*EUK	KAOEUK, KAO*EUK, K50EUK, K50*EUK = <b>kick</b>

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nigger	TPH*EUG/ER	TPHEUG/ER, THP*EUG/ER, 234*EUG/ER = <b>finger</b> <b>Note: check long vowel entries, can be entered as Niger</b>
pee	PAO*E	PAOE, PAO*E, 350E, 350*E = <b>pea</b>
piss	P*EUS	PEUS, P*EUS, PAOEUS, PAO*EUS, 3EUS, 3*EUS, 35EUS, 35*EUS = <b>miss or piece</b>
pisses	P*EUSZ	PEUSZ, P*EUSZ, PAOEUSZ, PAO*EUSZ, 3EUSZ, 3*EUSZ, 35EUSZ, 35*EUSZ = <b>misses or pieces</b>
poop	PAO*P	PAOP, PAO*P, 3507, 350*7 = <b>pop</b>
psychobitch	SAOEUBG OE PWEUFP	N/A
psychobitches	SAOEUBG OE PWEUFP/S	
punk-ass	PUFRPBG/A*RS	N/A
queer	KWAOER	KWAOER, KWAO*ER, KW50*ER, KW50*ER = <b>year</b>
queers	KWAOERS	KWAOERS, KWAO*ERS, KW50*ERS, KW50*ERS = <b>years</b>
slut	SHR*UT	SHRUT, SHR*UT, SHRAOUT, SHRAO*UT, 14RU9, 14R*U9, 14R50U9, 14R50*U9 = <b>shut</b>
tit	<b>N/A</b>	T*EUT = <b>tit</b> as in <b>tit for tat</b> TEUT = <b>tut</b>
whore	WHO*R	WHOR, WHO*R, HOR, HO*R = <b>who or hour</b>
whores	WHO*RS	WHORS, WHO*RS, HORS, HO*RS = <b>whose or hours</b>

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#### Obscenities Not Permitted Except Pay Channels

You may create a separate obscenities dictionary for pay channels if you do such work, only loading such dictionary during pay-channel programming. These words should never appear on network television in the United States even if they are spoken unless the captioning company you are working for has a policy permitting it.

Word	Steno In Main Dict. defined as
cocksucker	N/A
cunt	KUPBT, K*UPBT, KUPBTS, K*UPBTS, KAOUPBT, KAO*UPBT, KAOUPBTS, KAO*UPBTS, KAOUPBTSZ, KAO*UPBTSZ, KU7B9, K*U7B9, KU7B9S, K*U7B9S, KU7B9SZ, K*U7B9SZ = <b>can't</b>
fuck	TPUBG, TP*UBG, TPAOUBG, TPAO*UBG, 23UBG, 23*UBG, 2350UBG, 235*0UBG = <b>truck</b>
fucks	TPUBGS, TP*UBGS, TPAOUBGS, TPAO*UBGS, 23UBGS, 23*UBGS, 2350UBGS, 235*0UBGS, TPUBGSZ, TP*UBGSZ, TPAOUBGSZ, TPAO*UBGSZ, 23UBGSZ, 23*UBGSZ, 2350UBGSZ, 235*0UBGSZ, TPUBGZ, TP*UBGZ, TPAOUBGZ, TPAO*UBGZ, 23UBGZ, 23*UBGZ, 2350UBGZ, 235*0UBGZ = <b>trucks</b>
fucked	TPUBGD, TP*UBGD, TPAOUBGD, TPAO*UBGD, 23UBGD, 23*UBGD, 2350UBGD, 235*0UBGD = <b>trucked</b>
motherfucker	N/A
shit	SHEUT, SH*EUT, SHAOEUT, SHEO*EUT, 14EU9, 14*EU9, 1450EU9, 1450*EU9 = <b>shut</b>
shits	SHEUTS, SH*EUTS, SHAOEUTS, SHEO*EUTS, 14EU9S, 14*EU9S, 1450EU9S, 1450*EU9S, SHEUTSZ, SH*EUTSZ, SHAOEUTSZ, SHEO*EUTSZ, 14EU9SZ, 14*EU9SZ, SHEUTZ, SH*EUTZ, SHAOEUTZ, SHEO*EUTZ, 1450EU9SZ, 14EU9Z, 14*EU9Z, 1450EU9Z = <b>shut or shuts</b>
twat	TWAT, TWAUT, TWA*T, TWA*UT, TWAEUT, TWA*EUT, 2W59, 2W5U9, 2W5*9, 2W5*UT, 2W5EU9, 2W5*EU9 = <b>twas</b>

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#### Cock Words

Many permitted words contain the word part “cock.” You may enter the following words in dictionary both with asterisk in KOBG stroke and without:

Cockade	Cocklebur
Cock-a-doodle-doo	Cockleshell
Cock-a-hoop	Cockloft
Cockaigne or Cockayne	Cockney
Cock-a-leekie	Cockneyism
Cockalorum	Cock of the rock
Cockamamie or cockamamie	Cock of the wood
Cock-and-bull story	Cockpit
Cock-and-hen	Cockroach
Cock-a-whoop	Cockscomb
Cockatoo	Cock’s-foot or cock’s foot
Cockatrice	Cockshut
Cock-beaded	Cockshy
Cockboat	Cockspur
Cock-brained	Cocksure
Cockchafer	Cockswain (pronounced KOK/SIN)
Cockcroft	Cocktail
Cocked	Cock-tailed
Cocker	Cock-throttled
Cockerel	Cock-up
Cockeye	Cocky
Cockeyed	Bibcock
Cock-feathered	Half-cocked
Cockfight	Petcock
cocking	Turkey-cock
Cockhorse	
Cockle	

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#### *Parentheticals*

Parentheticals are commonplace in captioning and should be used to indicate non-verbal sounds that may or may not be apparent to the viewer. It is recommended that parentheticals be used sparingly. Parentheses ( ) are not used in captioning in the United States but replaced with the brackets [ ]. Although the following is a list of common parentheticals used in the industry, there are times when it becomes necessary for the captioner to manually insert a parenthetical. For example, if there are tires screeching in the background that does not have any bearing on the program, a captioner does not insert the parenthetical [ TIRES SCREECHING ]. However, if it is evident that the screeching of tires adds to the content, it is appropriate to insert the parenthetical.

Another common parenthetical is [ SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE ], which should be used when the captioner cannot with certainty identify the language being spoken.

Some companies use this style: [ CHEERS AND APPLAUSE ]

While others use this style: [CHEERS AND APPLAUSE]

And others use this style (mainly Canada): (cheers and applause)

A parenthetical should appear on a new line by itself (exception: [ BLEEP ] and [ INAUDIBLE ])

No punctuation should appear inside or outside of the end bracket.

**Create briefs for some or all of the following common parentheticals and be prepared to write others not listed manually:**

[ *(open bracket)* and ] *(closed bracket)*

[ APPLAUSE ]

[ BELL RINGING ]

[ BELL TOLLS ]

[ BLEEP ]

[ BUZZER ]

[ CHEERS ]

[ CHEERS AND APPLAUSE ]

[ DING ]

[ INAUDIBLE ] or [ QUESTION INAUDIBLE ]  
*(used sparingly such as in press conferences)*

[ KNOCKING ]

[ LAUGHTER ]

[ LAUGHTER AND APPLAUSE ]

[ NO AUDIO ] *(used during technical difficulties)*

[ PHONE RINGING ] or [ CELL PHONE RINGING ]

[ PLEASE STAND BY ] *(used to test with Master Control or during technical difficulties)*

[ SCREAMS ]

[ SINGING ]

[ SIRENS ]

[ SPEAKING FOREIGN LANGUAGE ]

[ SPEAKING SPANISH ]

[ TALKING AT THE SAME TIME ] *(used only in entertainment and talk shows)*

[ WHISTLE ] *(used in sports)*

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#### *Phonetics*

Captioners must turn the phonetics feature on in their captioning software. Check with your vendor regarding tweaking the default phonetics table to match your writing style. For example, a default table may contain the entry **-PBLG = j**. Some writers may use **-PBLG** for “TH” sounds and, therefore, that entry would need to be changed from **-PBLG = j** to **-PBLG = th**. You should go through every line of the table and make changes as necessary. It may also be necessary to tweak the phonetics table going forward as you notice phonetic translates that do not come close to what you were shooting for.

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#### *Style*

There are certain style guidelines that are generally accepted in the captioning industry. However, always take direction from the captioning companies for whom you are covering assignments. The following guidelines may be used in the event a captioner is not provided specific style guidelines.

#### **Literal Case/Mixed Case Captions**

Since most live captioning is performed in ALL CAPS, special commands are needed to force lowercase letter(s).

**Eclipse AccuCAP** – surround letter(s) with {l1} and {l0} (lowercase L numeral 1 and lowercase L numeral zero). {l1} turns literal case on; {l0} turns literal case off.  
M{l1}c{l0}Donald.

**Cheetah Captivator** – place <L> before the lowercase letter. M<L>cDonald

**Stenograph BCS** – to the right of New Text box, click on FS box. Double-click on <Caption:KeepCaseNext> before letter you want to be lower case.  
Or <Caption:KeepCaseOn> before and <Caption:KeepCaseOff> after multiple letters.  
M<Caption:KeepCaseNext>cDonald  
<Caption:KeepCaseOn>von<Caption:KeepCaseOff>

**ProCat** – place [l] (lowercase L) before the lowercase letter. M[l]cDonald

Search your dictionary for the following types of entries and modify the entries with your software's corresponding commands. Exception: Some proper names do not take lowercase, check spelling before adding commands:

<b>English</b>	<b>Appearance on air</b>
al-	al-SHEIKH
De	DeVRY
Di	DiCAPRIO
Du	DuPONT
La	LaMONT
Le	LeTOURNEAU
Mac	MackENZIE
Mc	McDONALD
(sp) de (sp)	PONCE de LEON
(sp) de la (sp)	VIA de la VALLE
(sp) del (sp)	CAMINO del la PLAZA
von	CLAUS von BULOW

(sp = space)

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Add the following entries to your dictionary forcing the first letter to be lowercase and/or create a lowercase "i" prefix to write before a word to create these and yet-to-be-invented Apple products:

iTV	iBook
eBay	iTune
iPod	iPhone
iPaq	iTouch
iTV	Wii
iMac	
iVillage	

Add the following entries to your dictionary forcing the lowercase letter(s) to be lowercase:

CHiPS  
TiVo  
F'ing  
NyQuil  
VoIP

#### Acronyms

All television networks are written WITHOUT periods

ABC, CBC, NBC, FOX, WB, UPN, BET, MTV, VH1, MSNBC, CNN, etc.

Some companies' style is 2-, 3-, and 4-letter acronyms that spell a word are written WITH periods (Exception: TV)

SHE MADE THE ANNOUNCEMENT OVER THE P.A.  
HIS PR MAN LEAKED THE STORY TO THE TABLOIDS  
I WORKED FOR C.A.T. SYSTEMS  
BMC WON THE BID  
THE S.W.A.T. TEAM WAS CALLED IN TO CONTROL THE SITUATION  
THE PHONE COMPANY IS OFFERING VOIP TO ITS CUSTOMERS

While other companies' style is 2- and 3-letter acronyms are written WITH periods but 4-letter acronyms are not

SHE MADE THE ANNOUNCEMENT OVER THE P.A.  
HIS P.R. MAN LEAKED THE STORY TO THE TABLOIDS  
I WORKED FOR C.A.T. SYSTEMS  
B.M.C. WON THE BID  
THE SWAT TEAM WAS CALLED IN TO CONTROL THE SITUATION  
THE PHONE COMPANY IS OFFERING VoIP TO ITS CUSTOMERS

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#### Measurements and Heights

Use figures for feet and inches but words for just feet (*NOTE: period and comma placed after " when " is used as inches*)

SHE IS JUST UNDER 5'2", SHORT FOR HER AGE  
THE DOG JUMPED 21'4" OFF THE DOCK  
HE WAS SEVEN FEET TALL

Use a lowercase X surrounded by hard spaces/sticky spaces when spoken as "BY"

4 x 4  
2 x 4

#### Numbers

Ten and under, use words (**Exception: Wind speeds and temperatures**)

Exception: Some companies' style requires the use of digits for ten and words for nine and under

11 and over use figures up to 999,999

Use figure plus the word million, billion, trillion except if thousands are spoken

4 million  
12 billion  
100 trillion  
8,507,444  
12,600,500,000

Use .5 for half, .25 for quarter, .75 for three-quarters when preceding million, billion, trillion

4.5 million  
3.75 trillion  
11.25 gazillion

Convert half, quarter, and three-quarters

HALF MILLION should be written as 500,000  
QUARTER BILLION should be written as 250 MILLION  
THREE QUARTER MILLION should be written as 750,000

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#### Fractions

Write out except when accompanied by a whole number (Exception: Stock Market, see below), and use decimals for tenths, hundredths, and thousandths

ONE-HALF

TWO-THIRDS

TWO AND A HALF should be written as 2 1/2

EIGHT AND A QUARTER should be written as 8 1/4

THREE AND A THIRD should be written as 3 1/3

EIGHT TENTHS should be written as .8

FIVE HUNDREDTHS should be written as .05

SEVEN THOUSANDTHS should be written as .007

Avoid the temptation to enter steno outlines in your dictionary to display the above examples. Rather, write it out manually including decimals and/or slashes. For example, if you use the number bar, write DECIMAL 8 or 2 SPACE 1 SLASH 2. If you do not use the number bar, write DECIMAL AET or TU SPACE WUPB SLASH TU.

#### Stock Market

Do not use commas unless Dow is over 10,000; NASDAQ and S&P do not take a comma

THE DOW IS DOWN 30 POINTS AT 12,222.

THE NASDAQ IS DOWN 11 POINTS AT 2583.

THE S&P 500 LOST 4 1/3 TO 1162.80

YOUR LOCAL INDEX FELL 5/8 (not 5/8ths or 5/8s)

#### Money

Use figures under 1 million

TWO DOLLARS AND FIFTY CENTS should be written as \$2.50

Write dollar sign even if not spoken if intention is clear

FOUR MILLION should be written as \$4 MILLION

Use .5 for "half"

EIGHT AND A HALF DOLLARS should be written as \$8.50

SIX AND A HALF BILLION DOLLARS should be written as \$6.5 billion

A QUARTER OF A MILLION DOLLARS should be written as \$250,000

A HALF BILLION DOLLARS should be written as \$500,000

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THREE-QUARTERS OF A MILLION DOLLARS should be written as \$750,000  
SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS should be written as 75 CENTS  
A DOLLAR FIFTY should be written as \$1.50  
FOUR AND A HALF DOLLARS should be written as \$4.50

Include dollar sign even if not spoken

Insert MILLION, for example, in series if not spoken in all instances

THE COST OF THE PROJECT WAS ESTIMATED AT \$50 MILLION TO  
\$60 MILLION  
(spoken 50 to \$60 million)

#### Times

Use figures for all times (*Exception: whole number plus minutes; TWO MINUTES TO GO*)

WE HOPE YOU'LL JOIN US AT 11  
should be written as WE HOPE YOU'LL JOIN US AT 11:00.  
WE HAVE FOUR AND A HALF MINUTES TO GO IN THE HALF  
should be written as WE HAVE 4:30 TO GO IN THE HALF  
WE'LL SEE YOU BACK HERE TOMORROW AT TWELVE NOON  
should be written as WE'LL SEE YOU BACK HERE TOMORROW AT 12:00 P.M.

#### Ages

Use figures when referring to ages

SHE WAS 4 1/2 YEARS OLD  
HE WAS 8 YEARS OLD  
THE 5-YEAR-OLD CHILD WAS PRESUMED MISSING

#### Punctuation

Periods, question marks, and exclamation points are followed by a new line

Do not use semicolons or ellipses; use colons only in titles, speaker IDs, and times

When using colons in titles and speaker IDs, only one space follows

“STAR WARS EPISODE III: REVENGE OF THE SITH”  
>> Reporter: GOOD EVENING.  
SHE BROKE A RECORD WITH A TIME OF 6:47.18 (six hours, 47 minutes, 18 seconds)

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#### Plurals and Possessives

Use lowercase S or apostrophe S depending on company's style with acronyms and numbers. Use S apostrophe in words and acronyms ending in S. Add -ES to names ending in S to make plural. Create a steno stroke for lowercase S and -ES so as not to rely on software intelligence. Create a steno stroke for -S to add to names when you do not want the software to change the spelling.

DVDs	DVD'S
1970s	1980'S
CBS'	ABC'S
WITNESS'	JONESES (more than one Jones)
ELVIS'	JONES' (belongs to John Jones)
KENNEDYS	JONSES' (belongs to the more than one Jones)
20s (temperatures)	20'S
'20s (1920s)	'20'S

#### Speaker IDs

Use >> (Chevrons) to indicate speaker changes  
Some companies use >>> to indicate a topic change

>>> GOOD AFTERNOON.  
THIS IS JANE SMITH.  
>>> TOPPING OUR NEWS THIS HOUR, A HIGH-SPEED CAR CHASE TIED  
UP TRAFFIC ON THE BOULEVARD.  
>>> AND LATER –  
LEARN HOW TO MAKE YOUR MONEY GROW.  
>>> BUT FIRST, WE CHECK IN WITH METEOROLOGIST JOE JONES WITH  
THE FORECAST.  
JOE?  
>> THANKS, JANE.  
>> I HOPE YOU HAVE SOME GOOD NEWS FOR US.  
>> YES, JANE, I THINK YOU'LL LIKE WHAT I HAVE TO TELL YOU.

Use Speaker IDs, or tokens, for talk show hosts, announcer, and translator. There is only one space after the colon.

>> GOOD AFTERNOON.  
>> Dr. Phil: ALL RIGHT.  
LOOKING GOOD.  
>> Announcer: COMING UP ON "A CURRENT AFFAIR" –  
THE JURY DELIBERATES IN THE MICHAEL JACKSON TRIAL.  
>> Translator: I HAVE BEEN IN THIS COUNTRY FOR SIX MONTHS.

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Some companies' style is ALL CAPS and no chevrons (>>).

OPRAH: HELLO.

In **Eclipse AccuCAP**, a speaker ID is defined as  
{S:Reporter} (case sensitive).

In **Stenograph BCS**, a speaker ID is defined as  
{Caption Period}<Colloquy>>> <Caption: KeepCaseOn>Reporter:<Caption:  
KeepCaseOff>

#### Quotations

Use quotations around movie, show, song, book, and newspaper titles, as well as nicknames within a name

“SHREK 2” TOPPED SALES AT THE BOX OFFICE THIS WEEKEND.  
“HOLLABACK GIRL” DROPPED TWO SPOTS ON THE VIDEO COUNTDOWN.  
“HEATHER HAS TWO MOMMIES” WAS BANNED FROM THE LIBRARY.  
“THE NEW YORK POST” REPORTED THE TAKEOVER.  
SEAN “P. DIDDY” COMBS CREATED THE CLOTHING LINE SEAN JOHN.  
P. DIDDY IS THE EXECUTIVE PRODUCER OF “MAKING OF THE BAND.”  
“DOUBT” WON THE TONY FOR BEST SHOW ON BROADWAY IN 2005.

#### Slashes

Use slashes for dates and fractions

9/11/01  
2/3  
50/50

#### Phone numbers

Use hyphens to separate numbers

555-1212  
1-800-222-TIPS

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#### Percentages

Use the percent symbol

25%

Insert percent symbol in series if not spoken in all instances

THE VALUE OF THE PROPERTY ROSE 20% TO 25% IN ONE YEAR (spoken  
20 to 25%)

Convert fractions to figures

8.5% (spoken 8 1/2 percent)

.4% (spoken 4/10 of a percentage point)

#### Web Addresses

Create stroke for .com, .org, .gov, .net, .info, .tv, .edu, .ca, etc.  
(Some companies use all lowercase)

[WWW.FCC.GOV](http://WWW.FCC.GOV)

[www.fcc.gov](http://www.fcc.gov)

Use delete space stroke between words in Web addresses. Some captioning software include a “glue together” or “stick together” feature that can be incorporated into a dictionary entry. Stroke the entry before a Web address to glue each word in the address together. Include a command in the Web site extensions to turn off the “glue together” or “stick together” command.

It’s very important to either include the “glue off” command in the definition or to stroke the command manually after the Web site name, or the remainder of the realtime text will glue together.

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### *Caption Positioning*

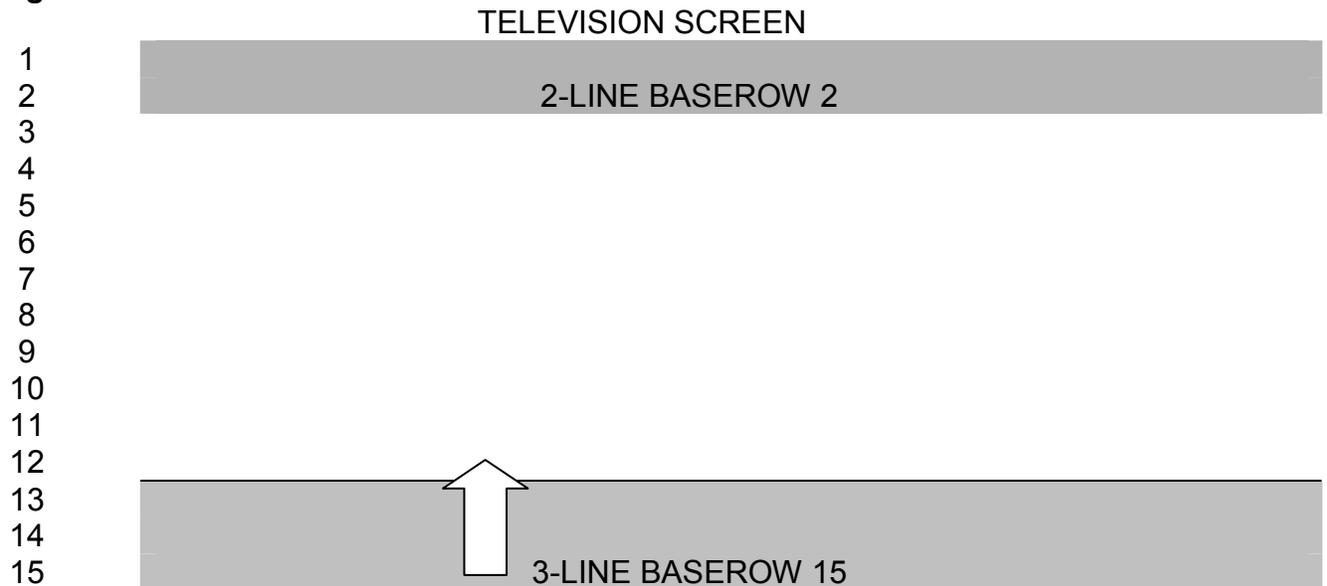
Captions are displayed on the television screen containing 15 rows and 32 columns. It is important to check with your software vendor to be sure your captioning software is capable of moving captions from bottom to top and left to right. The default and most common caption position for television programming is three rows of captions, 32 characters (*full length*), scrolling from the bottom up, appearing on lines 15, 14, and 13. See *Figure 1*.

Although some programming requires caption positioning other than the default, in most cases, the positioning will not change during the program; however, in sports captioning, moving the captions around during the event is quite common. Therefore, a captioner must have an understanding of his or her software's caption positioning features and the ability to create macros and/or steno definitions to achieve the required placement on the fly.

Most networks, stations, and/or captioning companies will provide the caption positions to its captioners. Generally, in sports captioning, pregame, halftime, and postgame captions appear at the bottom (either two-line or three-line, full length, sometimes bumped up if there is a ticker). Once action begins, the captioner should move the captions to the top, two-line, full-length position. The captioner should blank the captions before moving them from bottom to top and top to bottom.

**Baserow or Baseline** = lower-most line text appears

**Figure 1:**



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The captions should never cover up the score box (or the shot clock in basketball), so indent from left or from right accordingly. See Figures 2 and 3.

**Figure 2:**

NYY 5 TB 1	>> Michael: THE YANKEES COME UP TO BAT IN THE FOURTH LEADING BY FOUR.
---------------	--

**Figure 3:**

>> Michael: THE YANKEES COME UP TO BAT IN THE FOURTH  
LEADING BY FOUR.

NYY 5 TB 1
---------------

The score box usually does not move from the start of the game; however, in football on some networks, it will move from left to right upon possession change. When the ball changes possession, there will usually be a commercial break. After blanking and

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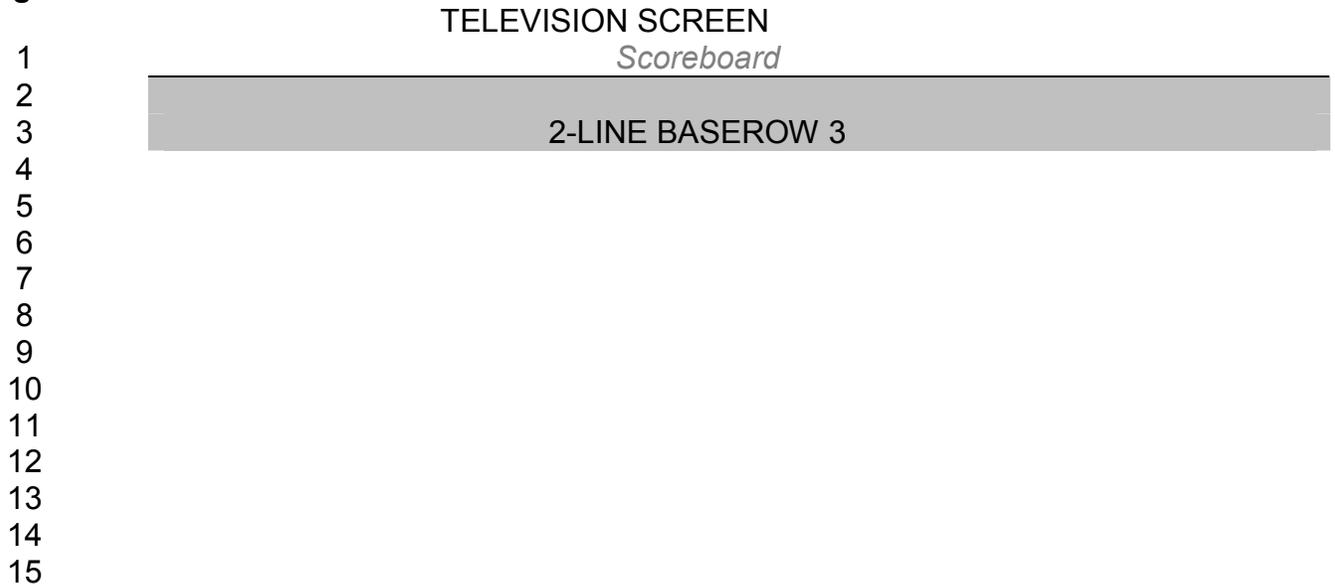
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enabling, change your caption position. Then when the game resumes, you will not have to remember to do it.

In tennis the score box may change in size (become longer) as the match progresses. Therefore, an adjustment to line length may be necessary at a commercial break.

FOX, FOX Sports Net, ESPN, and many other networks may place the scoreboard across the top of the screen. You should, therefore, position your captions one line below, two-line baserow 3. See Figure 4.

**Figure 4:**



When moving captions from bottom to top or vice versa, wait three seconds and then blank the screen first. You can also include a blank command as the first line of your macro to accomplish this.

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## Realtime Broadcast Captioning: Recommended Style and Format Guidelines For U.S. Programming

### *Captioner's Checklist*

To reduce the risk of human error, a checklist may be used prior to going on air. A captioner should be set up and ready to go on the air 15 to 30 minutes prior to airtime. This will ensure plenty of time to troubleshoot in the event there are technical problems.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boot up computer and turn on steno machine   | <input type="checkbox"/> Log program start time                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Open captioning software   | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsuspend captions when show starts     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Load job-specific dictionaries   | <b>Immediately After Program</b>                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Initialize realtime file   | <input type="checkbox"/> Blank and Enable (passthrough mode)     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Test speaker ID's  | <input type="checkbox"/> Hang up modem                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Test job-specific briefs   | <input type="checkbox"/> Hang up Audio line if applicable        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Set caption placement  | <input type="checkbox"/> Log program end time                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Load funds and credits and scripted files, if any  | <input type="checkbox"/> Scan file and Spellcheck                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Test funds and credits and scripted files, if any  | <input type="checkbox"/> Terminate realtime session              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blank and Enable (passthrough mode)  | <input type="checkbox"/> Save to text file, if necessary         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dial into encoder  | <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail file, if necessary               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Turn on TV and select channel or satellite coordinates   | <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail discrepancy report, if necessary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (for audio only) Dial into audio line  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plug in headphones – into TV or Gentner amplifier or Phone audio system                            |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flip switch on Gentner to Tap (leave handset off hook) or Seize (hang up handset)                  |  |
| OR  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Turn on phone amplifying system  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Call Master Control and send test – “Please Stand By” (cold station) or a dot/period (hot station) |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blank and Enable (passthrough mode)  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Suspend captions while waiting for program to start  |  |

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#### *Sports Captioning*

Captioning Sports is an integral part of any captioner's schedule. Even if a captioner chooses not to caption sporting events per se, a captioner will likely encounter sports segments during other programming, such as news. It is important that captioners have a solid sports dictionary which contains sports figures, including players, coaches, teams, mascots, and venues, both from professional leagues as well as college. A new captioner ought to practice writing sports off-air for a period of time before attempting to cover a sporting event on-air.

#### **Speaker IDs**

Using Speaker IDs, or tokens, is commonplace in sports captioning. A captioner will usually be provided the name of the broadcast team. Generally, most sports will be "called" by two broadcast announcers – the play-by-play announcer and the color commentator – although sometimes there will be one or more extra announcers in the booth or sports reporters on the floor or field. You may only see them on camera at the beginning of the event and perhaps one or two times during action, but through the majority of the event, you will have to identify them by voice only.

Sometimes speakers' voices can be distinguished based on what they are saying. The play-by-play announcer will describe the events of the game play by play and is usually the first person to speak when the event begins. He or she is usually the main speaker and tends to be a broadcaster by profession as opposed to the color commentator who is usually a former player of the sport that is being played. The color commentator is responsible for adding color to the comments. He or she will analyze the plays after the fact on instant replays. They are also known for rattling off stats and telling stories of their glory days as a player. It is helpful to have some basic knowledge of the color commentator's, or analyst's, history as a player for this reason.

If you caption the same sport for the same network frequently, you will come to know the broadcast team and their voices. However, if you find yourself having difficulty distinguishing between the speakers or the accuracy of your captions becomes compromised because you are struggling with speaker IDs, it is appropriate to abandon using them and simply use chevrons (>>) for the duration of the event.

Speaker IDs should be entered in the appropriate job dictionaries at the time you prep for the sporting event. Most companies define them as follows:

>> **Mike:** (chevron, chevron, initial cap, lowercase, colon, **ONE** space).

Some companies' style is to use all caps all the time; therefore, it would be as follows:

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**MIKE:** (no chevrons, all caps, colon, **ONE** space).

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It is recommended that Speaker IDs are defined in one stroke as something simple to remember, however something unique so that it does not create conflicts or word-boundary problems. Examples of Speaker ID tokens are as follows:

**PH-BG** or **PHOEUBG** = Mike (Jones)  
**SKWR-Z** or **SKWR-B** = Jay (Bilas)  
**TK-F** or **TK-B** = Dave (O'Brien)  
**TK-BG** or **TK-F** = Dick (Vitale)

*Tip: Double up on the stroke and define it as the full name:*

**SKWR-B x 2** = Jay Bilas

Distinguish between two speakers with the same first name by including the last name:

>> Craig Bolerjack:       **KR-B**  
>> Craig James:         **KR-FP**

#### Scores and Stats

Again, style varies depending on captioning company and sport, but generally, there are exceptions to the numbers rules when captioning sports.

In football when referring to the yard lines, use figures.

FIRST AND TEN ON THE 5-YARD LINE.

Use hyphens when a measurement modifies a noun and follow “numbers ten and under written out” rule.

THE QUARTERBACK COMPLETED A FIVE-YARD PASS.

Scores are written in figures separated by a hyphen (even if the word “to” is spoken) and preceded by a comma.

THE YANKEES SQUEEZED OUT A WIN AGAINST THE DIAMONDBACKS, 4-2

Use figures even if words are used to describe zero, such as nada, nothing, zip.

THE GIANTS ARE LEADING AT THE HALF, 27-0.

Use figure-hyphen-figure when implying tie scores.

THEY'RE ALL KNOTTED UP WITH TWO APIECE should be written as  
THEY'RE ALL KNOTTED UP 2-2.

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Use hyphen in place of words “of” but use word “for” when spoken.

Exception: “O-FER” is written OH-FER.

HE IS 0 FOR 2 TONIGHT.

SHAQ SHOT 3 OF 4 FROM THE FOUL LINE should be written as SHAQ SHOT  
3-4 FROM THE FOUL LINE

In tennis, replace the word LOVE with 0 (zero) and separate sets with commas.

15-0 (spoken LOVE)

7-5, 7-5, 7-6

In golf, use figures for scores, pars, clubs, and holes

12<sup>th</sup> HOLE

2 OVER PAR 7

5 IRON

In basketball, use a hyphen to separate zone phrases (some companies use figures)

TWO-THREE ZONE

2-3 ZONE

In baseball, use decimals for batting and pitching averages; use numerals in a series of stats

HE IS BATTING .350

HE IS ONE HIT AWAY FROM BATTING 1.000 (batting “a thousand”)

HE HAS AN E.R.A. of 1.45

HE HAS 37 HOMERS, 2 DOUBLES, AND 15 RBIs.

In baseball, use figures separated by hyphen for pitch counts

AND THE 3-2 PITCH (3 balls, 2 strikes, aka full count)

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#### *Scripting*

##### **Creating Script Files**

Oftentimes captioners are provided with a script of a program. The captioner can then send the script file one line at a time over the air with a single keystroke. There are three options when receiving a script:

- Convert script from Word or other program into captioning software and send file.
- Start realtime session in captioning software and create script file by writing provided script, edit new file and send.
- Prep from provided script and write program without sending script file.

Some scripts contain unneeded information to the captioner, such as stage direction and other instructional type material. In this case, it would be time-consuming to convert and edit the provided script and a captioner may be better off either prepping from it or writing it into a new script file.

Other scripts may be perfect for converting and importing into a captioner's software but may arrive at the last minute, in which case prepping from it would be the best decision. The most important thing to remember is if a script is provided and there is ample time to convert it and import it or to write it and create a new script file, that is the ideal scenario. Sending a script file that has been edited beforehand will almost always yield a cleaner or more accurate product than writing a program live.

When editing a script to be imported into captioning software, the text must be changed to uppercase, and a new line must be inserted after each period and question mark, and speaker IDs and chevrons must be inserted. Once imported, it may also be necessary to insert slug lines (see below). Some captioning software have a script manager feature, which manages multiple scripts for one program. Consult your captioning software vendor for instructions on how to set up and send a script file. Practice sending the file off-air to ensure it displays properly.

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A typical script file, copied, pasted, and edited from an e-mail into a new transcript file:

>> Mike: THE WORLD OF  
RELATIONSHIPS CAN BE  
AWFULLY CONFUSING TO  
NAVIGATE.  
MOST MEN AND WOMEN  
STRUGGLE DAILY WITH  
DATING DILEMMAS.  
DO I ASK HIM OUT?  
SHOULD I CALL HER TODAY  
OR TOMORROW?  
HOW CAN I BE BETTER IN  
THE BOUDOIR?  
BUT SOMETIMES WHEN  
YOU HAVE QUESTIONS  
ABOUT THE OPPOSITE SEX,  
IT'S BEST TO GO DIRECTLY  
TO THE SOURCE.  
A PAIR OF WEB SITES ARE  
TRYING TO MAKE  
RELATIONSHIP WOES A  
LITTLE LESS WORRISOME.

#### **Scripting and Realtiming**

The most important thing to remember when sending a script file is to wait until the last word of a line is spoken before sending the line. Oftentimes scripts are deviated from; many people ad lib, and a captioner could end up sending words that were not spoken. It may be necessary to write what is being said rather than send it from the script file in the event the words spoken do not match the words in the script. This exercise is a unique skill and should not be attempted without much practice. The end result should be seamless, and there should not be long pauses between live realtime writing and script sending. Practice going back and forth between writing and sending, moving the cursor from the line that is being written to the next line that will be sent. If ever you become lost in the script, abandon it and continue writing live realtime until such time that a search can be performed within the script, perhaps at a commercial break.

Once a captioner becomes skilled at writing and scripting, it will be possible to quickly search for keywords in the script to get back on track; however, a new captioner should not attempt this if the result is missed captions. In addition, a skilled captioner will be capable of editing text in the script on the fly, making small corrections before sending a line.

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If there are obscenities in a script, replace the obscenity with [ BLEEP ]. If you are unsure if an obscenity is permissible or not permissible or if the program will bleep the obscenity, insert a flag or comment (check with software vendor) before the line with the obscenity to alert you that it is upcoming, and be prepared to write the line from your machine.

#### **Slug lines**

Slug lines is a term used in the broadcasting industry that refers to a heading or title of, in this case, a story or news blurb within a script. Sometimes provided scripts will contain slug lines that may require removing or reformatting. Some captioning software are capable of inserting slug lines or script lines. They may also have a type of script manager to organize multiple scripts and/or slug lines.

#### **Sending script files**

Most captioning software have a macro or command for sending script. It is also possible to create a steno stroke associated with that macro or command to send script. Check with your software vendor for more information on loading and sending script files.

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#### *Musical Notes and Lyrics*

DICTIONARY ENTRY (Eclipse AccuCAP)	DICTIONARY ENTRY (Stenograph BCS)	DICTIONARY ENTRY (ProCat)	SUGGESTED OUTLINE	DESCRIPTION
{N}¶{~}	<New Line Paragraph><Caption:Music Note><Sticky Space>	<[c:music]_~	SNOET	OPEN note
{~}¶{~}	<Sticky Space><Caption:Music Note><New Line Paragraph><Caption:Music Note>	~_[C:music]<[c:music]_~	SNOET/SNOET	COMBO note
{~}¶{~}	<Sticky Space><Caption:Music Note><New Line Paragraph>	~_[C:music]	SNO*ET	END note
{~}¶¶{~}	<Sticky Space><Caption:Music Note><Caption:Music Note><New Line Paragraph>	~_[C:music]<[c:music]<~	SNO*ET/SNO*ET	END of song note
{N}¶¶{~}	<New Line Paragraph><Caption:Music Note><Caption:Music Note><New Line Paragraph>	<[c:music]_[c:music]<~	SNOET/Z	STANDALONE note (no lyrics)

¶ in Eclipse, CTRL-W, select paragraph symbol.

¶ will appear as musical note once it passes through encoder.

Musical notes surround lyrics in captioning to represent singing or, in the case of the standalone note, to represent instrumental music.

Do not use punctuation when writing musical lyrics.

**NOTE: Some companies' style includes a speaker ID (chevron) before the first line of lyrics**

>> ¶ OH, SAY CAN YOU SEE ¶

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#### A typical song file in Eclipse AccuCAP:

¶ OH, SAY CAN YOU SEE  
BY THE DAWN'S EARLY LIGHT ¶  
¶ WHAT SO PROUDLY WE HAILED  
AT THE TWILIGHT'S LAST GLEAMING ¶  
¶ WHOSE BROAD STRIPES AND  
BRIGHT STARS  
THROUGH THE PERILOUS FIGHT ¶  
¶ O'ER THE RAMPARTS WE WATCHED  
WERE SO GALLANTLY STREAMING ¶  
¶ AND THE ROCKETS' RED GLARE  
THE BOMBS BURSTING IN AIR ¶  
¶ GAVE PROOF THROUGH THE NIGHT  
THAT OUR FLAG WAS STILL THERE ¶  
¶ O SAY DOES THAT STAR SPANGLED  
BANNER YET WAVE ¶  
¶ O'ER THE LAND OF THE FREE  
AND THE HOME OF THE BRAVE ¶¶

#### A typical song file in Cheetah Captivator:

\M OH, SAY CAN YOU SEE\E  
BY THE DAWN'S EARLY LIGHT \M\E  
\M WHAT SO PROUDLY WE HAILED\E  
AT THE TWILIGHT'S LAST GLEAMING \M\E  
\M WHOSE BROAD STRIPES AND\E  
BRIGHT STARS\E  
THROUGH THE PERILOUS FIGHT \M\E  
\M O'ER THE RAMPARTS WE WATCHED\E  
WERE SO GALLANTLY STREAMING \M\E  
\M AND THE ROCKETS' RED GLARE\E  
THE BOMBS BURSTING IN AIR \M\E  
\M GAVE PROOF THROUGH THE NIGHT\E  
THAT OUR FLAG WAS STILL THERE \M\E  
\M O SAY DOES THAT STAR SPANGLED\E  
BANNER YET WAVE \M\E  
\M O'ER THE LAND OF THE FREE\E  
AND THE HOME OF THE BRAVE \M\M\E

\M in a Captivator file will appear as a musical note once it passes through encoder.

\M\M in a Captivator file will appear as a double musical note once it passes through encoder.

\E in a Captivator file will appear as a new line with no punctuation once it passes through encoder.

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#### A typical song file in Stenograph BCS:

♪ OH, SAY CAN YOU SEE  
BY THE DAWN'S EARLY LIGHT ♪  
♪ WHAT SO PROUDLY WE HAILED  
AT THE TWILIGHT'S LAST GLEAMING ♪  
♪ WHOSE BROAD STRIPES AND  
BRIGHT STARS  
THROUGH THE PERILOUS FIGHT ♪  
♪ O'ER THE RAMPARTS WE WATCHED  
WERE SO GALLANTLY STREAMING ♪  
♪ AND THE ROCKETS' RED GLARE  
THE BOMBS BURSTING IN AIR ♪  
♪ GAVE PROOF THROUGH THE NIGHT  
THAT OUR FLAG WAS STILL THERE ♪  
♪ O SAY DOES THAT STAR SPANGLED  
BANNER YET WAVE ♪  
♪ O'ER THE LAND OF THE FREE  
AND THE HOME OF THE BRAVE ♪♪

Writing lyrics takes a lot of practice and concentration. A captioner must not only listen to the lyrics but be precise in the placement of the musical notes. He or she must also force a new line to keep sentences short. Any steno stroke may be used. Define the stroke as {F} (Fixed paragraph) in Eclipse or <New Line> in BCS, which will force a new line without punctuation. A *good captioner* will take care to make his/her live-writing lyrics as neat and clean as the song files above.

A good rule is to place an open note before the first line, force a new line at a logical place, place a closed musical note at the end of that line and repeat. It is also acceptable to surround four lines, rather than two, with notes. In that case, place a musical note at the beginning of the first line, force a new line, write the second line, force a new line, write a third line, force a new line, write the fourth line, place a note at the end of that line.

If there is speaking within a song, it is acceptable to place the double chevron (>>) before the spoken words to indicate the artist has switched from singing to speaking; however, an exception would be rapping. Although sometimes rapping sounds like speaking, it is a form of singing and should, therefore, be surrounded by musical notes.

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In the middle of a song containing lyrics, oftentimes there will be an instrumental break. It is not necessary to place a standalone musical note in at that point. Simply leave the last lines of lyrics up for at least three seconds, then blank and wait for the next verse. However, if the instrumental break is unusually long, 30 to 60 seconds, then a standalone musical note can be placed, if for no other reason than to signify to the deaf or hard-of-hearing viewer that the captions are still working.

A situation where a standalone musical note may be used is when there is no speaking and there is music playing that contains no lyrics. In this case, simply place a standalone note on the screen, let it hang for at least five seconds and then blank. Wait about three seconds, and then send another standalone note; again let it hang for at least five seconds and then blank. Repeat these steps for the duration of the instrumental song. If someone is speaking and there is simply background music, it is not necessary to place musical notes, unless there is a pause in the speaking creating a natural spot for the musical notes to appear. In certain circumstances, if the instrumental-only song can be identified, a parenthetical description may be used.

[ “Taps” playing ] or  
[ The “Rocky” theme playing ]

Another acceptable captioning practice would be to write a parenthetical in the event a song with lyrics can be identified but the captioner does not feel he or she can make out the words well enough to caption the song with the best quality.

[ Rap music playing ]  
[ Rapping ]  
[ “Shake Ya Tailfeather” playing ]

Along the same lines, another acceptable practice in the above situation is to simply write standalone musical notes as described above, letting them hang, blanking, and repeating. This is particularly useful if the captioner cannot identify the title of the song and/or make out the lyrics and write them with the best quality. This practice, however, should not be used on a regular basis. A captioner should always attempt to write lyrics whenever possible. That is why it is so important for captioners to not only keep up with topical events but topical entertainment events such as popular music and the like. If a captioner has at least heard of “Shake Ya Tailfeather,” he or she has a much better chance of writing the lyrics. At least the chorus of the song could be written.

Occasionally, when attempting to write lyrics, a captioner will begin a line and then not understand the last word or two heard. It is best not to panic and not to spend too much time on it or many lines after will be lost. An acceptable solution is to either write a word that sounds like what was heard or a word that fits the context or to simply place an end musical note and move on. Dashes may be used; however, it doesn’t always look very

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nice. Making up lyrics out of the blue is not the best idea either. It's definitely a judgment call.

Finally, if a captioner thinks he or she heard an obscenity in a song, he or she must be absolutely positive that obscenity was aired before writing it. The best policy is "When in doubt, leave it out." Simply write [ Bleep ].

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#### *Quality Control*

Realtime captioning quality considers three parts in its guidelines: completeness, accuracy, and timeliness. Realtime captioning is considered to be complete if the captions are legible, readable, make sense, convey the essential information of the story or broadcast, and do not stop except to allow obstructed graphics to be read or if the corresponding audio stops. The average half-hour broadcast airing with commercials will have approximately 3,500 words displayed in the captions with a minimal acceptable threshold of 2,900 words.

The following items are to be considered when determining the completeness of captions:

- Captions are complete and appear continuously from the start to the end of the broadcast.
- Nonverbal communications affecting the substance and flavor of the broadcast are included.
- The captions contain meaningful punctuation and speakers are identified by symbol or name.

The relative difficulty of a broadcast will affect the completeness and quality of the captions. Factors that can impact the quality and completeness of realtime captioning are as follows:

- Incomplete preparation material
- Equipment failure at
  - a. Captioning studio
  - b. Broadcast facility
  - c. Cable company or other distribution facility
  - d. Viewer's home
- Data transmission error from captioning studio to broadcast facility
- Clarity of program audio
- Overlapping speakers
- Speed of the material
- Speaker accents

Realtime captioning is considered to have met the accuracy guideline if after review it is determined that the captions meet a minimum accuracy level of 98%.

#### **Total Accuracy Rate Formula**

Convert the raw transcript (unedited) into a .txt or .rtf file and open in Microsoft Word. Count all the errors, keeping in mind a two-stroke word that does not translate if broken into two English words counts as two errors. Multiply number of errors by 100. Divide

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that number by total word count, which can be ascertained in Word by clicking on Tools and then Word Count. Then subtract that number from 100. And that is the score. 98% is considered entry-level on-air quality. The ultimate goal, however, is above 99%.

A new captioner should track his or her own progress by reviewing and scoring raw transcripts frequently. It is helpful to categorize errors to identify areas of weakness. See Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

**Captioner Trainee Correction Sheet**

Speaker ID  	Wrong Word  ###	Plural  	Spelling/Dict Entry  
Misstroke  ### III	Apostrophe  	Numbers  	Quotes  
1,2 Word/Hyphen (1/2 point)  	Extra/Missing Word  	Inflected Endings  	and/an  
Punctuation (1/2 point)  ###	Stack/Split Stroke  	Style  	Other  

Errors:	30
Word Count:	2,000
Errors x 100:	3,000
divided by Word Count:	1.5
100 – 1.6 = Score:	<b><u>98.5%</u></b>

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The following list includes items that should be counted as errors in determining accuracy:

- Incorrect participles
- Omitted or improperly used possessives
- Missing essential words
- Extra words or strokes
- Misstrokes
- Misspelled words that were not fingerspelled
- Untranslates (unless it results in the correct spelling of a phonetic output)
- Wrong numbers
- Wrong words
- Homophone conflicts
- Speaker ID errors
- Missing or incorrect punctuation including hyphens and slashes
- Extra/missing space
- Style

Realtime captioning is considered to have met the timeliness guideline if the captions are delivered with a minimum delay, trailing the corresponding audio transmission by an amount of time that the delay, in and of itself, does not significantly impact the meaningfulness of the captions.

When an incorrect word is displayed, a captioner should avoid blanking the screen. It is acceptable to use dashes or a correction stroke (an asterisk) to remove the incorrect word and then write the correct stroke or strokes. A captioner should be mindful that stroking a correction stroke more than twice may result in garbled captions and, thus, ought to avoid doing so. If dashes are used to make corrections, the incorrect word prior to the dashes may not be counted as an error if the word following the dashes displays correctly.

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#### *Editing, Paraphrasing and Fingerspelling*

One of the tools captioners use to achieve accurate captions is to edit, or paraphrase. It is acceptable and appropriate to do so when the accuracy of your captions would be otherwise compromised. However, contrary to popular belief, a good captioner will always strive to write verbatim. The following are examples of when to edit and how to edit.

#### **Speed**

Let's face it. Even a merit writer cannot get everything all the time. The skill of editing takes time and practice. Captioners are trained first as court reporters, and as such writing verbatim has always been the goal. However, there are times when getting every word will come at the expense of accurate captions. The first trick of the trade captioners may use when speed is a factor is to "intentionally drop" a word here or there to allow time to catch up.

#### ***Spoken:***

>> THE FAMILY OF **AN ALABAMA TEENAGER** MISSING IN ARUBA IS REFUSING TO GIVE UP HOPE THAT SHE WILL BE FOUND.

#### ***Edited:***

>> THE FAMILY OF **A TEENAGER** MISSING IN ARUBA IS REFUSING TO GIVE UP HOPE THAT SHE WILL BE FOUND.

#### ***Spoken:***

>> IN THE MEANTIME, **NICK JOHN AND ABRAHAM JONES**, WHO WERE ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH THE DISAPPEARANCE OF 18-YEAR-OLD NATALEE HOLLOWAY, WILL BE BACK IN COURT TODAY AS THE JUDGE DETERMINES IF THERE IS ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO HOLD THEM.

#### ***Edited:***

>> **TWO MEN** WERE ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH THE DISAPPEARANCE OF NATALEE HOLLOWAY. THEY WILL BE BACK IN COURT TODAY AS THE JUDGE DETERMINES IF THERE IS ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO HOLD THEM.

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Of course, there are those occasions when paraphrasing becomes necessary, especially during a sports segment.

***Spoken:***

>> SIXTH INNING, STILL SCORELESS.

**RYAN KLESKO STEPS UP AND LAUNCHES ONE TO THE DEEPEST PART OF THE DOG POUND, OFF THE TOP OF THE WALL.**

***Paraphrased:***

>> IN THE SIXTH INNING, **KLESKO** LAUNCHES ONE TO THE DEEPEST PART OF THE **FIELD**.

***Spoken:***

>> WELL, **EARLIER IN THE DAY YESTERDAY**, BASEBALL'S AMATEUR DRAFT, THE PADRES TAKING A COUPLE OF PITCHERS IN THE FIRST ROUND, **INCLUDING RIGHT-HANDER CESAR CARRILLO FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI**, THE ACC PITCHER OF THE YEAR. THEY THEN TOOK LEFTY CESAR RAMOS IN A SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST-ROUND PICK WHEN THEY **LOST DAVID WELLS TO THE RED SOX**.

***Paraphrased:***

>> **IN** BASEBALL'S AMATEUR DRAFT **YESTERDAY**, THE PADRES **TOOK** A COUPLE OF PITCHERS IN THE FIRST ROUND, INCLUDING **CESAR CARRILLO**. THEY **ALSO** TOOK CESAR RAMOS IN A SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST-ROUND PICK WHEN THEY **LOST DAVID WELLS**.

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#### Accuracy

Editing and Fingerspelling are crucial tools in captioning to ensure the highest of quality. Although it is acceptable and appropriate to replace names with proper nouns such as HE, SHE, and THEY, it is the goal, whenever possible, to give the viewer a name even if the spelling is not readily available.

#### ***Spoken:***

>> A MURRIETA MAN ACCUSED OF SHOOTING A CHULA VISTA POLICE OFFICER WILL BE ARRAIGNED TODAY.  
21-YEAR-OLD **BRAD GOFORTH** WAS ARRESTED EARLY YESTERDAY, TUESDAY MORNING, AFTER AN EIGHT-HOUR SEARCH.

#### ***Fingerspelled:***

>> A MURRIETA MAN ACCUSED OF SHOOTING A CHULA VISTA POLICE OFFICER WILL BE ARRAIGNED TODAY.  
21-YEAR-OLD **BRAD G-O-F-O-R-T-H** WAS ARRESTED EARLY YESTERDAY, TUESDAY MORNING, AFTER AN EIGHT-HOUR SEARCH.

#### ***Glued:***

>> A MURRIETA MAN ACCUSED OF SHOOTING A CHULA VISTA POLICE OFFICER WILL BE ARRAIGNED TODAY.  
21-YEAR-OLD **BRAD GO (DELETE SPACE) FORTH** WAS ARRESTED EARLY YESTERDAY, TUESDAY MORNING, AFTER AN EIGHT-HOUR SEARCH.

#### ***Edited:***

>> A MURRIETA MAN ACCUSED OF SHOOTING A CHULA VISTA POLICE OFFICER WILL BE ARRAIGNED TODAY.  
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Fingerspelling takes practice. Running through some basic finger drills each day is recommended. Start by going through the alphabet, but do it slowly and return all fingers to the home-row key between each stroke. Next, pull out a book or magazine, and practice fingerspelling words randomly. Finally, close your eyes and practice fingerspelling names familiar to you, visualizing the letters in your mind.

## NCRA Captioning Community of Interest

### Realtime Broadcast Captioning: Recommended Style and Format Guidelines For U.S. Programming

#### *Alphabets*

Alphabets are an integral part of realtime captioning. Most captioners have several alphabets which are used regularly for captioning. Check with your software vendor for dictionary definitions. The following is a list of examples of some common alphabets:

<u>Steno Examples:</u>	<u>English Display</u>
<b>A-FPLT</b>	A (glues to other letters and numbers)
<b>A-FRPBLGTS</b>	A- (stitching)
<b>A-6789</b>	A. (acronyms with periods)
<b>A*-FPLT</b>	“A” (quoted letters)
<b>A-RBGS</b>	lowercase A (used for fingerspelling in webcasting or mixed-case captions)
<b>A*-RBGS</b>	literal case A (used for fingerspelling literal case items in all caps display)

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#### *Blanking*

Blanking simply refers to clearing the TV screen of captions.

In Eclipse AccuCAP, the definition is **{BLANK}**.

In Stenograph's BCS, it is **<Caption:Clear>**.

In Cheetah Captivator, it is **<BV>**.

A general rule when blanking is to wait at least three seconds before doing so or read the lines that appear on the screen to make sure there is enough time for them to be read before blanking. Some instances where blanking is appropriate (again, varies from company to company):

- Graphics – if there are graphics on the screen which closely match what the speaker is saying, it is acceptable to blank rather than write what is being said. However, if the speaker is giving more information than appears on the screen, do not blank; rather, continue writing.
- If a phone number or address appears on the screen and your captions are covering up that information, use your judgment whether it is more distracting to continue writing or blanking.
- Open Captions – sometimes programs will display open captions. Open captions are captions that are displayed even when closed captioning is turned off. If you haven't begun writing the dialogue yet, you may wait three seconds, blank, and begin writing once the open captions have been removed.
- There may be occasions where lottery numbers or other information are displayed on the screen where there is no accompanying description by a speaker. It is appropriate to blank in those circumstances.
- Pauses – if there is a lull in a program between applause, a pause between speakers, or a musical interlude, rather than let captions hang for too long, it is likewise appropriate to blank.
- Teases – on some shows, especially talk shows, there will be a tease for the segment coming up after the commercial. Sometimes, there will be a pause, some music, and a graphic saying "Next" or "Coming up." This is a good place to blank.

Exception – audio-only programs. A captioner should avoid blanking if the broadcast cannot be seen.

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#### *Enabling (Passthrough)*

Enabling, or passthrough, is taking your captions offline and enabling other captions to come online, such as captioning of commercials.

In Eclipse AccuCAP, there is a macro in the AccuCap.set file. A steno stroke may be defined as {M:CC:RT Blank & Pass}.  
In Stenograph's BCS, it is <Caption:Pass>.  
In Cheetah Captivator, it is <PASS>.

It is very important to enable quickly when, first, going to commercial break and, second, a show has ended. As a program goes into a commercial break, the commercial's captions will pop on immediately unless you have not enabled quickly enough. You would be, in effect, stepping on their captions. Therefore, it is crucial that you enable BEFORE the program breaks. In order to do this effectively, it is appropriate and permissible to blank after the speaker completes a sentence or two before finishing. This will give you ample time to let your captions hang for three seconds, blank and enable. If you caption the same program regularly, you will learn the best time to do this.

>>> COMING UP, A TEENAGER SURVIVES AN ATTACK BY A GREAT  
WHITE SHARK OFF **THE NEW JERSEY COAST**.  
>>> HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS LAUNCH THEIR SUMMER VACATION  
WITH A CATAPULTING CONTEST.  
THAT IS STRAIGHT AHEAD.

In this example, if a captioner learns that this station tends to break immediately without any type of music or pause after the last word, he or she would stop writing after **NEW JERSEY COAST**, let the captions hang for three seconds, blank and enable, all while the second speaker is saying the next two sentences. Of course, one cannot predict what the last sentence or two is going to be; however, there are sometimes cues or warnings of an impending break. "**COMING UP**" is a cue as well as music playing over the teases.

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#### *Blocking*

Blocking is the opposite of enabling, and a captioner will rarely have the need to manually block captions. That is because when you begin writing on the steno machine, the first stroke automatically blocks the encoder so no other captions can come through. However, there are instances where you may need to hit a block command.

Some encoders are slower than others to kick in, so there is a bit of a delay when you first begin writing. If you insert a block command as soon as the show starts or immediately upon returning from a commercial, the captions will appear more quickly.

In Eclipse AccuCAP, a steno stroke may be defined as the macro **{M:CC:Block}**.  
In BCS **<Caption:Block>**.

#### *Flush (or Forceout)*

In captioning it is important to be able to force out your last strokes so that they will appear on the TV screen without hanging in the buffer for too long. You can choose any stroke you like, but the most commonly used stroke is **\*#**, which is **ASTERISK** and **NUMBER BAR**. If you are writing at a steady pace, it may not be necessary to force out; however, if you reach the end of a sentence, stroke a period, and must wait for the next sentence to begin, you must flush out the pending strokes. Practice flushing often so that it becomes a regular part of your writing.

In Eclipse, a stroke may be defined as **{FLUSH}**  
In BCS **<Caption:Flush>**  
In DigitalCat **Dump Stroke**

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#### *Credits and Funds*

Credits are popped on or rolled up usually at the end of a program displaying the captioning company that provided the closed captioning.

CAPTIONING BY 123 CAPTIONING COMPANY  
[www.123captioningcompany.com](http://www.123captioningcompany.com)

Funds are popped on or rolled up either at the beginning or end of a program displaying who paid for the closed captioning.

[ CAPTIONS PAID FOR BY ABC ]

Credits and Funds can be created in a transcript file and sent from keyboard or machine macros. Again, wait three seconds before blanking screen and popping or sending credit/fund.

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### *Resources and Links*

#### Web Sites

**Broadcast Boxes** <http://www.broadcastboxes.com/index-2.html>

**Captions Org** [www.captions.org/jobs.cfm](http://www.captions.org/jobs.cfm)

**CRR Books** [www.crrbooks.com](http://www.crrbooks.com)

**Communication Works of the Deaf, Inc.** <http://www.captworks.com>

**Dictionary Jumpstart** [www.dictionaryjumpstart.com](http://www.dictionaryjumpstart.com)

**Gary Robson** [www.robson.org/gary/captioning/index.html](http://www.robson.org/gary/captioning/index.html) [www.redlodgebooks.com](http://www.redlodgebooks.com)

**Google** [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)

**NCRA** [www.ncraonline.org](http://www.ncraonline.org)

**NCRA's Captioning Corner** <http://www.ncraonline.org/captioning/corner/index.shtml>

**Yahoo! Broadcast Captioners Group**

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/broadcastcaptioners/>

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#### Captioning Software Companies

##### **Advantage Software (Eclipse AccuCap)**

925 Central Parkway  
Stuart, FL 34994  
800-800-1759

[www.accucap.com](http://www.accucap.com)

##### **Cheetah International (Captivator)**

1500 West El Camino Avenue #476  
Sacramento, CA 95833-1945  
866-302-2287

[www.caption.com](http://www.caption.com)

##### **ProCAT (CaptiVision)**

5126 Clareton Drive, Suite 260  
Agoura Hills, CA 91301  
800-966-1221

[www.procat.com](http://www.procat.com)

##### **Rapid Text, Inc. (Rapid Caption)**

1801 Dove Street, Suite 101  
Newport Beach, CA 92660  
949-399-9200

[www.rapidtext.com](http://www.rapidtext.com)

##### **Stenograph, L.L.C. (BCS)**

1500 Bishop Court  
Mount Prospect, Illinois 60056  
800-323-4247

[www.stenograph.com](http://www.stenograph.com)

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#### Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Organizations

##### **Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

**AG Bell** helps families, health-care providers and education professionals understand childhood hearing loss and the importance of early diagnosis and intervention. Through advocacy, education, research and financial aid, AG Bell helps to ensure that every child and adult with hearing loss has the opportunity to listen, talk and thrive in mainstream society. With chapters located in the United States and a network of international affiliates, AG Bell supports its mission: *Advocating Independence through Listening and Talking!*

[www.agbell.org](http://www.agbell.org)

##### **American Speech-Language-Hearing Association**

**ASHA** is the professional, scientific, and credentialing association for more than 127,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists, speech-language pathologists, and speech, language, and hearing scientists.

<http://www.asha.org/default.htm>

##### **American Academy of Audiology**

Resources for consumers who want to learn more about hearing and balance, students thinking about a career as an audiologist, and professionals with questions about technical topics in audiology.

[www.audiology.org](http://www.audiology.org)

##### **American Hearing Research Foundation**

**AHRF** serves two vital roles: to fund significant research in hearing and balance disorders and to help educate the public.

[www.american-hearing.org](http://www.american-hearing.org)

##### **American Sign Language Info**

**ASLInfo** focuses on ASL, Interpreting and deaf-related information.

[www.aslinfo.com](http://www.aslinfo.com)

##### **American Society for Deaf Children**

**ASDC** supports and educates families of deaf and hard-of-hearing children and advocates for high-quality programs and services.

[www.deafchildren.org](http://www.deafchildren.org)

##### **Association of Late Deafened Adults (ALDA)**

**ALDA's** membership is international in scope. ALDA works collaboratively with other organizations around the world serving the needs of late-deafened people and extends a welcome to everyone, late deafened or not, who supports our goals.

[www.alda.org](http://www.alda.org)

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#### **Canadian Association of the Deaf**

The **CAD** provides consultation and information on Deaf needs and interests to the public, business, media, educators, governments and others and conducts research and collects data regarding Deaf issues; issues reports on these studies; and provides expertise on them; develops and implements pilot programs and offers assistance to Deaf organizations and service agencies across the country, and also provides a major library and resource center on deafness at its office in Ottawa, Ontario.

<http://www.cad.ca/en/>

#### **Canadian Hard of Hearing Association**

The **CHHA** is a consumer-based organization formed by and for hard-of-hearing Canadians. CHHA works cooperatively with professionals, service providers and government bodies, and provides information about hard-of-hearing issues and solutions. CHHA is Canada's only nation-wide non-profit consumer organization run by and for hard-of-hearing people. CHHA works to eliminate the isolation, indignation, and frustration of hard-of-hearing and deafened persons by assisting in increasing personal self esteem and confidence which will lead to total integration in society.

<http://www.chha.ca/chha/>

#### **Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing**

Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Resources

[www.deafandhh.com](http://www.deafandhh.com)

#### **International Federation of Hard of Hearing People**

IFHOH provides a platform for cooperation and exchange of information between hard-of-hearing organizations and promotes greater understanding amongst hard-of-hearing people throughout the world.

[www.ifhoh.org](http://www.ifhoh.org)

#### **Hearing Loss Association of America (formerly SHHH)**

HAAA is the nation's largest organization for people with hearing loss. The Hearing Loss Association of America exists to open the world of communication for people with hearing loss through information, education, advocacy and support.

[www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org) or [www.shhh.org](http://www.shhh.org)

#### **Hearing Loss Web**

Hearing Loss Web provides information and support for hard-of-hearing and late-deafened people.

[www.hearinglossweb.com](http://www.hearinglossweb.com)

#### **National Association of the Deaf**

**NAD** advocates for the rights and quality of life of deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals in the United States.

[www.nad.org](http://www.nad.org)

## **NCRA Captioning Community of Interest**

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#### **National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders**

**NIDCD** is one of the Institutes that comprise the National Institutes of Health (NIH). NIH is the Federal government's focal point for the support of biomedical research. NIH's mission is to uncover new knowledge that will lead to better health for everyone. Simply described, the goal of NIH research is to acquire new knowledge to help prevent, detect, diagnose, and treat disease and disability. NIH is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

[www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing/asl.asp](http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing/asl.asp)

#### **Telecommunications for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing, Inc.**

**TDI's** mission is to promote equal access in telecommunications and media for people who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, late-deafened, or deaf-blind.

[www.tdi-online.org](http://www.tdi-online.org)

#### **Deaf Linx**

Online Resource and Information for deaf and hard-of-hearing.

[www.deaflinx.com](http://www.deaflinx.com)