Captions & Transcripts

What is it for?

Captions are timed text that appears with a video to show spoken words, music, and sounds, helping viewers who are deaf or hard of hearing. Transcripts are full-text versions of the audio, not timed, and often used for audio-only content like podcasts. The main difference is that captions are synced to the video, while transcripts are not.

While subtitles (a form of captions) are now being used widely by younger generations, captions and transcripts are incredibly important for users with accessibility needs. They are most important for:

- Users with hearing impairments
- Users with cognitive difficulties
- Users who learn best by reading

How to support it

If your video is on YouTube, they have a helpful guide on how to include captions in your videos.

In most video call tools, like Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google Meet, you can turn on captions in the meeting controls. They might be hidden under 'More'. If the meeting is recorded, many tools can also give you a transcript after the recording has finished.

Creating transcripts can require a bit more work than captions. One straightforward method is to upload your video to a tool that makes automatic captions or transcripts, like YouTube, Microsoft Teams or Slack (in Slack, you can send it to yourself). It will then take a little time to generate a transcript. You can then copy and paste that into a document of your choosing. Once it's in your document, watch the video back, reading through the transcript. Ensure it's all easy to read, remove any weird punctuation from natural pauses, and then share that transcript document alongside your video.

Useful links

- YouTube: Add subtitles and captions
- How to Create a Transcript: A Step-by-Step Guide (2025)
- World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) WAI: Transcripts
- What are Captions?