

# DIY Resources for Closed Captioning and Transcription

## Overview

While using a 3rd party captioning service certainly makes the captioning and transcription process easier for video producers, sometimes it is not a plausible solution (mainly due to cost). People often ask if there is a "free" way to caption their videos. If you want accurate captions, usually the only free way to get them is to do it yourself.



This brief will take you through the DIY captioning and transcription workflow. We have compiled the following resources of helpful tools, different workflow strategies, and captioning and transcription standards to help make the DIY process as quick and easy as possible. Good luck!

## Creating Closed Captions for YouTube Videos

If your videos are hosted on YouTube, there are a number of ways to create your own captions directly in the YouTube editing interface. There are three possibilities for creating captions by leveraging YouTube's offerings:

A screenshot of a YouTube video player. The video title is "Watch an Introduction to Our Free Caption Format Converter". The video shows a man in a white shirt speaking in an office setting. A subtitle at the bottom of the video reads "Our Caption Format Converter is a free tool" with the 3PlayMedia logo. The video player interface includes a progress bar at 0:20 / 1:03 and a settings menu. On the right side, the closed captions are displayed in a list format. The selected subtitle is "Our Caption Format Converter is a free tool" with a time range of 0:19.3 to 0:21.7. Other visible subtitles include "company.", "If you use our service, you'll have access", "to more than 50 different caption formats and many tools", and "and technologies.".

Start Time	End Time	Text
0:11.9	0:12.9	company.
0:12.9	0:15.0	If you use our service, you'll have access
0:15.0	0:17.9	to more than 50 different caption formats and many tools
0:17.9	0:19.3	and technologies.
0:19.3	0:21.7	Our Caption Format Converter is a free tool

## Download and Edit YouTube's Automatic Captions

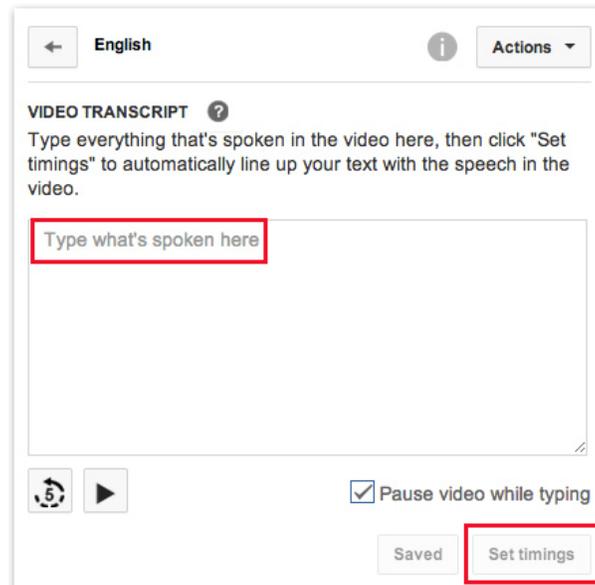
YouTube's automatic captions provide a good basis for captioning, but are far too inaccurate to be used on their own. Not only do the automatic captions provide error-ridden captions that hurt video accessibility, but YouTube and Google will not index the auto captions (this means they don't help with your SEO). Here is how you can leverage the auto captions to create accurate captions for your YouTube videos:

1. From the Video Manager, select your video and click **Edit > Subtitles and CC**. Click **English (Automatic)** to pull up the automatic captions, then click **Actions > Download .srt**. *Note that Google and YouTube will not index your captions if you edit the automatic captions in the YouTube interface.*
2. Open your .srt file with a plain text editor. Edit the captions while playing back your video to make sure the captions are accurate. When you are happy with your caption file, make sure you save it with the .srt extension.
3. Upload your edited captions to YouTube by going back into the Subtitles and CC editor. Click **Add subtitles or CC** and select English, then click **Upload a File** and choose **Subtitles file**. Upload your .srt file; you can edit timing, if necessary, after the file has uploaded.

## Create a Transcript in YouTube

If you don't want to use YouTube's automatic captions as a starting point, you can create a transcript and sync it with the video directly in YouTube:

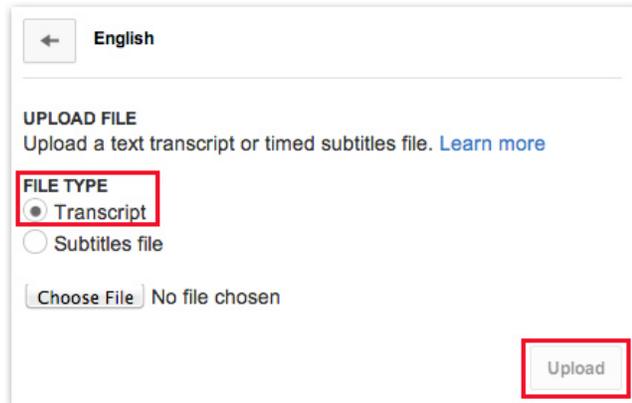
1. From the Video Manager, select your video and click **Edit > Subtitles and CC**. Select **Add subtitles or CC** and choose your language.
2. Select **Transcribe and Set Timings** and, in the space provided, type the transcript of your video. YouTube will automatically pause the video as you type so you can transcribe the video quickly and more accurately.
3. When you are satisfied with your transcript, select **Set Timings**. This will sync your transcript with the video. You can always edit timing once the captions are published.



## Create a Transcript File to Upload

If you would rather transcribe your video on your own, or if you already have a script for your video, you can upload the file to YouTube to create captions.

1. First, create a transcript of your video if you do not already have a script. Keep in mind YouTube's recommendations for formatting.
2. Navigate to the Video Manager in YouTube and click **Edit > Subtitles and CC** next to your video. Select **Add Subtitles or CC** and choose your language.
3. Choose **Upload a File**, select **Transcript**, and choose your .txt file for upload.
4. When your transcript has uploaded, select **Set Timings** to sync your transcript with the video. You can always edit timing once the captions are published.



English

**UPLOAD FILE**  
Upload a text transcript or timed subtitles file. [Learn more](#)

**FILE TYPE**

Transcript

Subtitles file

No file chosen

## DIY Captioning Workflow for Other Video Platforms

If your videos are not on YouTube, there are many tools that can make the DIY captioning process easier. Keep in mind that many video platforms require different caption file formats – we'll show you how to create the right format in Step 3.

### 1. Start by Creating a Transcript File

You can manually create a transcript file by typing the spoken content of your media file into a plain text editor. Many people find it easier to first put the media through automatic speech recognition software (like Dragon, Dictation, or Camtasia). While this transcript will have a lot of errors, it is often quicker to clean up an inaccurate transcript than to start from scratch.

Another option is to use transcription software that is designed to make the process faster and easier. Express Scribe works on both Mac and PC: it has configurable keyboard shortcuts and allows you to slow down playback so you can keep up with the audio. While Express Scribe tops the list, there are many other transcription software options to consider, as well.

Before completing your transcript, follow best practices for formatting your text.

### 2. Synchronize Your Transcript with Your Media File

Once you have completed your transcript, you need to synchronize it with the media to create caption files. There are many different programs that can help you align your captions, to varying degrees of accuracy. You should always double check the final file before posting it to your video. Programs that can help you sync your transcript and video include Camtasia, MovieCaptioner, Accessify, CaptionTube, Subtitle Horse, YouTube Subtitler, and Magpie.

Once you are satisfied with your captions, save the file to your computer. You can always edit the timing in a plain text editor.

### 3. Upload Your Captions to Your Video

Depending on what video platform you use, you may need various types of caption files. You can check our list of caption and subtitle formats to figure out what format your video player requires. If the program you used to time-synchronize your transcript does not provide the caption file format you need, you can use 3Play Media's free caption format converter to convert your caption file into the necessary format.

Once you have the correct caption file format, upload it to your video and view it with captions! You can learn how to add captions to many different video platforms in our How-To Guides.

## Captioning Guides

Many universities and organizations that do captioning in-house have made their DIY captioning guides available to the public. Ohio State University has a particularly helpful guide of DIY techniques. University of Texas Austin and Northern Illinois University also have useful information for DIY captioning. YouTube's captioning documentation is fairly comprehensive, as well, if your videos are hosted there.

## Conclusion

As you dive in, it is important to keep in mind best practices for captioning, transcription, and subtitling. Formatting, accuracy, speaker identification, and capturing non-speech sounds are all important in order to meet quality standards for captioning.

If you find that captioning content yourself becomes too cumbersome, you can always use a captioning service like 3Play Media or CaptionsForYouTube.

## Resources

### YouTube

[Editing](#) YouTube's automatic captions

[Creating a transcript](#) in YouTube

[Uploading a transcript](#) file to YouTube

YouTube's [formatting recommendations](#)

### DIY Captioning with Other Video Platforms

[Caption file formats](#) explained

[Express Scribe](#)

Top 10 free transcription [software](#)

Programs for [syncing transcripts](#)

Free [caption format converter](#)

[How-To guides](#) for adding captions to various video platforms

### DIY Captioning Guides

[Ohio State University](#)

[University of Texas Austin](#)

[Northern Illinois University](#)

YouTube's captioning [documentation](#)

[Best practices](#) for captioning, transcription, and subtitling

## About 3Play Media

3Play Media provides cost-effective, premium quality captioning, transcription, and subtitling solutions to hundreds of customers in higher education, enterprise, entertainment, media, and government. Our mission is to simplify the process by providing a user-friendly account system, flexible API's, and integrations with a multitude of video players, platforms, and lecture capture systems. 3Play Media is based in Cambridge, MA and has been operating since 2007.

### Contact

3Play Media  
125 CambridgePark Drive, Suite 402  
Cambridge, MA 02140

**Website** – [www.3playmedia.com](http://www.3playmedia.com)

**Email** – [info@3playmedia.com](mailto:info@3playmedia.com)

**Phone** – (617) 764-5189