Audio and video media need to include an alternative format so that the media content is accessible to people with and without disabilities. There are 4 types of alternative formats that should be used to make audio and video content more accessible:

- Captions
- Transcripts
- Audio Descriptions
- Sign Language Interpretations

The Web Accessibility Initiative provides more information with examples and other resources on making audio and video media accessible.

Captions

Captions display all audio content from a video in text on the screen, including speech, sound effects and music. There are two types of captions:

1. **Closed Captions (CC)** - can be turned on or off by the user; and
2. **Open Captions (OC)** - are always visible as part of the video and cannot be turned off.

Closed captions are a good and essential practice for making video content more accessible. When possible though, open captions should be included with video content as a best practice. The benefits of captions for those who need them outweighs the inconvenience to those who find them distracting.

Captions benefit people with and without disabilities by providing:

- Essential access for people who are deaf or hard of hearing;
- Support for people with learning disabilities related to difficulties processing speech or audio-video media;
- Support for English language learners;

- A preferred way of processing information for people with reading/writing learning styles;
- A way to watch video content in quiet or noisy environments; and
- A solution to poor audio quality or sound-related technical difficulties.

Automatic live captions are now widely available as accessibility features of online video platforms such as YouTube, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams. However, always be mindful of caption quality and accuracy as some automatic caption and/or transcription software are better than others.

Did you know? The [Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission](#) (CRTC) standard for caption quality of pre-recorded content is 100% accuracy. For live programming, 98% accuracy is required for captions in English and 85% accuracy for captions in French.

Transcripts

Transcripts are the text version of audio content. They offer many of the same benefits as how captions help people with and without disabilities. There are two types of transcripts:

1. **Basic transcripts** - are the audio content in text; and
2. **Descriptive transcripts** - include both the audio content and the visual information needed to understand the content in text.

Audio-only content must include a basic transcript. Audio-video content should include a descriptive transcript as a best practice. Transcripts can be included in the description for the video, the comments section of the video, or in a link to the full transcript.

Audio Description

Audio description explains the visual information needed to understand video

content. This is also known as video description or described video. Prerecorded audio-video content must include audio descriptions to provide important visual information to people who are blind or have low vision.

Sign Language Interpretations

Sign language is the first language of many people who are Deaf, but no everyone who is deaf knows sign language. The Canadian Association for the Deaf uses American Sign Language (ASL) and la langue des signes québeécoise (LSQ) as its two official languages.

Sign language interpreters across Ontario use ASL. It is optional to include sign language interpretations as a media alternative for audio-video content. However, the use of sign language interpretations for videos and live events is considered a best practice.

Do…

- Include accurate captions and transcripts in all pre-recorded audio-video content.
- Include transcripts in all pre-recorded audio-only content.
- Use virtual meeting platforms that offer automatic live captions, where possible.
- Include sign language interpretations in all audio-video content and live events as a best practice.

Don't…

- **Don't** forget to include captions in all pre-recorded audio-video content.
- **Don't** forget to include transcripts in all pre-recorded audio-only content.
- **Don't** provide inaccurate captions or transcripts.