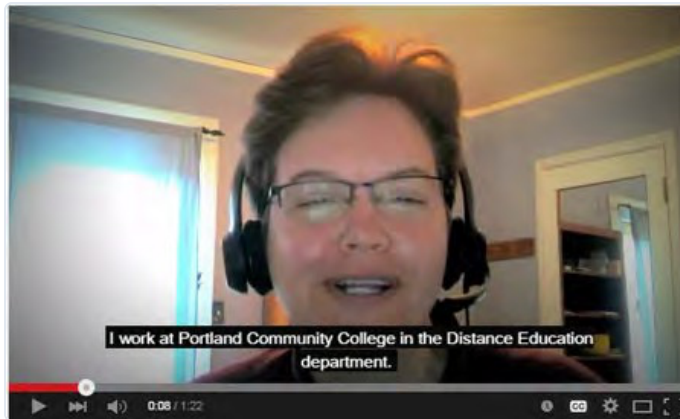


CREATING ACCESSIBLE VIDEOS

Videos should be produced and delivered in ways that ensure every member of the audience can access them. An accessible video includes captions, a transcript, and audio description, and is delivered through an accessible media player. This piece walks through each of those pieces in full detail.

Captions

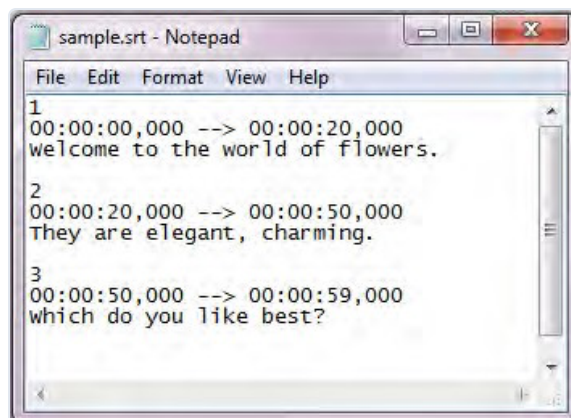
Captions are text versions of the audio content, synchronized with the video. They are essential for ensuring your video is accessible to students, employees, and members of the public who are deaf or hard of hearing. Captions also generate an interactive transcript that lets users click anywhere in the caption window to jump to that point in the video.



Transcripts — plain-text versions of the audio — also help non-native English speakers follow along, make it possible to search for content within the video, and help all students learn the spelling of technical terms spoken in the video.

Do-It-Yourself Captions

This is a labor-intensive process, but it puts the power in your hands. The end product is a caption file — most are plain text files with time codes marking the start and stop of each caption. There are several caption file formats, each with slight variations in syntax; which one you need depends on where your video is hosted and how it's ultimately being viewed.



Even automated or semi-automated captioning options generally require some editing on your part, so it's worth understanding this process even if you don't plan to type out every caption by hand.

CREATING ACCESSIBLE VIDEOS

Automated Captioning (Free)

With the advent of AI and the continued popularity of platforms like YouTube, it's no longer necessary to use complicated third-party captioning tools. The process for captioning using YouTube, for free:

1. Upload the video to YouTube Studio as *Unlisted* to keep it private while you work.
2. Wait for YouTube to generate automatic captions.
3. **Critical step:** Go to the Subtitles menu in YouTube Studio and select *Edit* to correct the machine-generated text. AI rarely gets technical terms or names right on the first pass.
4. Review and edit the captions to be sure they're accurate and easy to follow.
5. Download the captions as a **.VTT** or **.SRT** file.

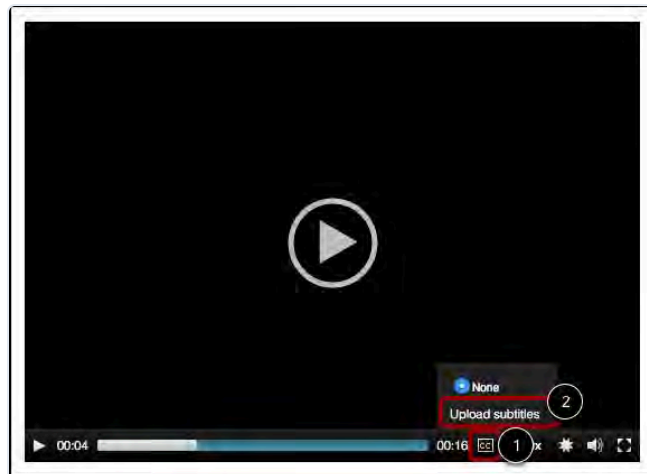
Note: It's important to host videos in a format and location that supports captions — some media players and hosting providers don't support them at all. Ask whether captions are supported before settling on a media player or hosting solution.

Adding Captions to Videos Uploaded to Canvas

First, it's worth identifying the difference between uploading and embedding. You can embed videos from other sites — including YouTube — directly into a Canvas content area, so students play them from that site's video player without leaving your course. If this is how you're using video, you'll need to add captions to the source (e.g., in YouTube Studio), not in Canvas itself.

If instead you've created your own video, have the file on your computer, and uploaded it directly into Canvas using the Upload Media link, the steps below add captions to that uploaded file:

1. Open the video in your Canvas content.
2. Select the Upload Subtitles option in the video's menu.
3. Upload your caption file, confirming it's in **.VTT** format.



Note: iOS devices (iPhones/iPads) can only display captions in WebVTT format within the Canvas app. If you use a different caption format, students on iOS devices won't be able to see captions through Canvas.



CREATING ACCESSIBLE VIDEOS

Audio Description

Audio description is a separate narrated track describing important visual content that isn't already conveyed through the existing audio — on-screen text, or key actions that wouldn't be obvious from sound alone. Visually impaired viewers can follow most of a video through its audio, but anything presented only visually needs this additional layer to be accessible.

There are two general approaches: outsourcing to a professional captioning or description service, or doing it yourself. A good do-it-yourself approach for videos with only a little visual-only content is a timed text file, similar to a closed caption file, created with the same tools used for captioning.

If you're producing the description yourself, a practical approach is to simply narrate what you're doing as you film — or, if you're editing in post-production, record the narration afterward once all the footage exists. Describe what's actually happening, not just the purpose of what's shown: if you're filming a lab demonstration, describe the materials, their color, how full each container is, and the actions being taken, not only the concept being taught.

Choosing an Accessible Media Player

Whether you're picking a media player or a hosting service, ask:

1. Does it support closed captions?
2. Does it support audio description, with narration toggled on and off?
3. Can its controls be operated without a mouse?
4. Are its buttons properly labeled for screen readers?
5. Is it fully functional, accessibility features included, across platforms and major browsers?

Canvas Videos: Upload or Embed?

The practical question most instructors actually face isn't which media player to choose — it's whether to upload a video file directly into Canvas, or host it on YouTube and embed it into the course page. As a partner, we almost always recommend **embedding from YouTube** over uploading directly into Canvas.

Why embed from YouTube: YouTube automatically optimizes video quality to match each student's connection speed, so a student on a slower connection still gets a smooth streaming experience — something a file uploaded directly into Canvas doesn't do on its own. It also keeps your course's Canvas storage footprint small, and gives you a head start on captions, since YouTube generates them automatically (though, as covered earlier, always review and correct them before relying on them). There's a longer-term benefit for you as the instructor, too: a video hosted on your own YouTube channel stays yours even if your access to a particular Canvas course ever ends, which isn't true of a file uploaded directly into that course.

Embed, don't link: This recommendation is specifically to *embed* the video so it plays inside the Canvas page itself — not to post a link that sends students away to YouTube. Students should never need to leave Canvas to watch course content if it can be avoided.