Q: Best practice is verbatim subtitles – word for word – does this include when people make errors, repeat themselves, or say um, or err a lot?

A: When it comes to errors, yes! Subtitle it as it's been said. If somebody says things that are grammatically incorrect, the subtitles should reflect this. Remember the purpose is to enable deaf audiences to get all the same information from the video that hearing audiences get. If the information that the hearing audiences get is confusing or incorrect, it should be the same for deaf audiences! However, ums and errs, are the exception that can be cut out, as they don't really add any extra information. If somebody says them a lot as a sort of vocal signature, you could add in a couple to indicate that, but no need to add every single one.

Q: Can you use abbreviations for subtitles, or provide the full words?

A: Abbreviations are primarily used to shorten writing, such as Dr for Doctor, or St for Saint. For the most part, subtitle it how you would write it. For example, if you were subtitling Doctor Who, you wouldn't subtitle them as the Dr! But if you were subtitling a church name that's written like "St Adalbert's Church", you wouldn't subtitle it as "Saint Adalbert's Church". But then if you had someone talking about someone called Saint Adalbert, and the church they went to, then you would! So, in short, it's not a hard and fast rule. Follow the same reasoning you would if you were writing the audio out as an article.

Q: What is good practice on using upper case? I noticed that off-screen character names and music descriptions were in upper case.

A: Past good practice has been to use capitals for any labels, i.e. anything within square brackets, to distinguish it from the speech, however, some viewers can find this hard to read, so it's fine to use regular case for labels but make sure you capitalize words in line with grammar. Whichever style you choose, keep it consistent so viewers can become familiar with your style. Don't change between videos.

Q: Would you use colours to indicate different speakers? or Narrator

A: Either works! But if you are going to use colours, make sure they are accessible for people who are visually impaired or colour blind. If you are using colours in digital subtitles, bear in mind that not all platforms support colours, so the information would be lost.

Q: What's the best practice for subtitling text on screen? E.g. is it better to avoid on-screen footnotes/additional text that isn't read out in a video with voiceover?

A: Don't repeat text that's already on screen. If it's not spoken, don't subtitle it! If someone does read something on screen out loud, you can also use a label to indicate they are reading, rather than writing the whole thing out as long as the viewer has time to read it (i.e. if it's on screen for the same length of time that it's read out). The viewer can read it directly from the onscreen text. However, if the

speaker is semi reading out the text, perhaps jumping around, or varying from the text quite significantly, then you would subtitle what they're saying.

Q: How would you subtitle if performers are mimicking sounds - like ambulance/motorbike?

A: You can either use onomatopoeia such as "Broom broom!" or "Nee naw nee naw!" or a label like [Imitating ambulance] depending on how accurate the impression is, and the context. For example, in a children's show, then an onomatopia would fit well, as children may not know what something sounds like if you just put [Imitating motorbike], whereas in a serious drama, if the impression is done in a serious tone, then "Nee naw nee naw" might seem a bit disjointed, so then you could put [Imitating ambulance].

Q: We have some intro / outro music (from a music library). The song title/artist would mean nothing. How should we acknowledge that?

A: You could look at describing the tempo or musical instrument, such as [Piano trilling], or [Guitar chord], if it's incidental background music, as opposed to a scene setting, emotionally significant piece, then just a short label is all that's needed. Keep it 2-3 words.

Q: When identifying a speaker at the beginning of a video, I have sometimes seen speaker's accents described. Is this best practice? Thanks again!

A: A complex question, as who does/doesn't have an accent depends on your perspective! If the accent is distinct from the context of the video, then yes you could have a label at the start of the speaker's first line. For example, a video looking at a London artist, where somebody comes on and speaks in a heavy Scottish accent, should be labelled. However, if you were a Welsh organisation interviewing people in Wales about a sculpture in Wales, you wouldn't necessarily label every speaker as having a Welsh accent, but if they had a strong regional accent, then you might label that. Unfamiliar accents can be hard to lipread, and so hard to identify, so it is important information to include, but only where it's unusual for the expected "norm" of the video context.

Q: Given what you said about verbal sounds, should you subtitle names correctly spelled or how they are pronounced? (eg Saoirse or Aoife)

A: Names should be subtitled as they are correctly spelt. Just like words such as Colonel and Leicester should be spelt the "proper" way, as opposed to phonetically.

Q: Are elaborate script fonts OK for captions?

A: As long as the font is legible, you can use whatever you like. However, elaborate fonts can be more difficult for people to read for all sorts of reasons, visual impairment, neurodivergence, and so on. If you are going to use an unusual font, I would recommend doing really thorough audience testing to make sure it's accessible.

Q: Is there no need to describe actions, as this should be integrated into the script as audio description (in the most 'natural' or effective way that is as less noticeable as possible)? And if there is no dialogue on stage - should the action be described on video projection if they are crucial to the narrative?

A: Audio description is a separate access method with its own set of best practice standards. Actions should absolutely be described in audio description files; this provides access to people who are blind and visually impaired. For people who are deaf and sighted, this can be patronizing as they can see the action happening, they don't need to be told. The case when this might be needed would be in providing access to people who are both deaf and visually impaired, in which case there would need to be an audio description track and subtitles for that specific track. But the subtitles would be specific for that audio, you wouldn't use the audio description subtitles with the non-audio described soundtrack.