

Tip Sheet

Your rights: captions on television

What are captions?

Captions provide the dialogue and important background sounds in onscreen text for television viewers who are Deaf, hard of hearing or people watching television in noisy places, like the gym. Captions are displayed in text, usually at the bottom of the screen.

When are captions supposed to be provided on television?

All Australian free-to-air broadcasters must provide closed captions on programs shown between 6:00pm and 10:30pm on their primary channel (i.e. Nine, Seven, Ten, ABC1 and SBS1). News and current affairs programs must have captions at all times. Multi channels are the extra channels that you get when you have a digital television or digital set-top box i.e. 7Mate, GO!, ABC2, SBS2 etc. Multi channels only have to have closed captions if a program was previously screened on its primary channel with captions. For example, if Channel Seven broadcast *American Dad* with captions it must include captions when it shows on 7mate.

You can make a complaint whenever captions are missing or if they are so bad you can't read or understand them.

How to make a captioning complaint

You must make the complaint to the broadcaster within 30 days of the program being shown on television. You can't make a complaint by phone or TTY (text telephone), you can only complain by mail, fax or online.

To make a complaint by mail or fax contact the TV station directly. A full list of contact details can be found on the ACCAN website.

Complaints for the ABC should be made at: <http://www.abc.net.au/contact/complain.htm>

Complaints for the SBS should be made at: <http://www20.sbs.com.au/complaints/>

For all other online complaints go to: http://www.freetv.com.au/Content_Common/OnlineComplaintStep1.aspx

It is important to provide as much information as possible in your complaint. If you can, include a photo of the captioning problem. Always include:

- your name and contact information i.e. email, address or phone number
- the date and time of the caption problem
- the name of the television program
- the caption complaint i.e. no captions, inaccurate captions, slow captions etc.

What will happen with a complaint?

Broadcasters must respond to complaints about captions within 60 days. If the broadcaster does not respond within 60 days or the problem is not fixed the complaint can be sent to the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to investigate. If the complaint is a breach of the broadcaster's code of practice the ACMA will force the broadcaster to fix the problem. To make a complaint to the ACMA go to:

http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/pc=PC_90137