



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 6:00am and midnight on their primary channel (for example: Nine, Seven, Ten, ABC1 and SBS1). News and current affairs programs must have captions at all times.

Free-to-air multi channels, such as 7Mate, GO!, ABC2 and SBS2, only have to have closed-captions if the program was previously screened on its primary channel with captions. For example, if Channel Seven broadcasts *American Dad!* with captions it must include captions if it broadcasts the show on 7Mate.

How to make a captioning complaint

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

If you have a complaint about the quality of captions, or lack of captions during a program broadcast on free-to-air television you can [complain directly](#) to the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA).

For any other caption complaints, you need to make the complaint to the broadcaster within 30 days of the program being shown on television. You cannot make a complaint by phone or TTY (text telephone), you can only complain online, by mail and fax.

To make a complaint by mail or fax, contact the TV station directly.

You can make a complaint to the ABC about captions on the [ABC website](#).

You can make a complaint to SBS about captions on the [SBS website](#).

You can make complaints about the other free-to-air stations on the [Free TV Australia website](#).

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

Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN)
Australia's peak body representing communications consumers

PO Box 639, Broadway NSW 2007

Tel: (02) 9288 4000 | Fax: (02) 9288 4019 | accan.org.au | via the [NRS](#)

- Your name and contact information (your email address or phone number)
- The date and time of the caption problem
- The name of the television program
- The reason for your caption complaint. For example, no captions, inaccurate captions or slow captions.

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 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.