ACCESSIBILITY AT SCALE

Practical Strategies for Real Inclusion

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What we’ll cover

- Accessibility Overview
- Captioning + Audio Description Essentials
- How-Tos & Best Practices
- Common Pitfalls & Legacy Constraints
- The Future of Inclusive Media
- Key Takeaways

Accessibility Overview

Captions serve:

- Deaf/hard of hearing users
- Viewers in noisy environments
- Learning via reading (ESL)

Captions aren’t just for the **1.5 billion people** with disabling hearing loss — 80%+ of social video is watched without sound.

Audio Description (AD) Serves:

Blind/low-vision users by narrating key visual information.

Audio description serves the **2.2 billion people** with vision impairment, enabling genuine inclusion for all.

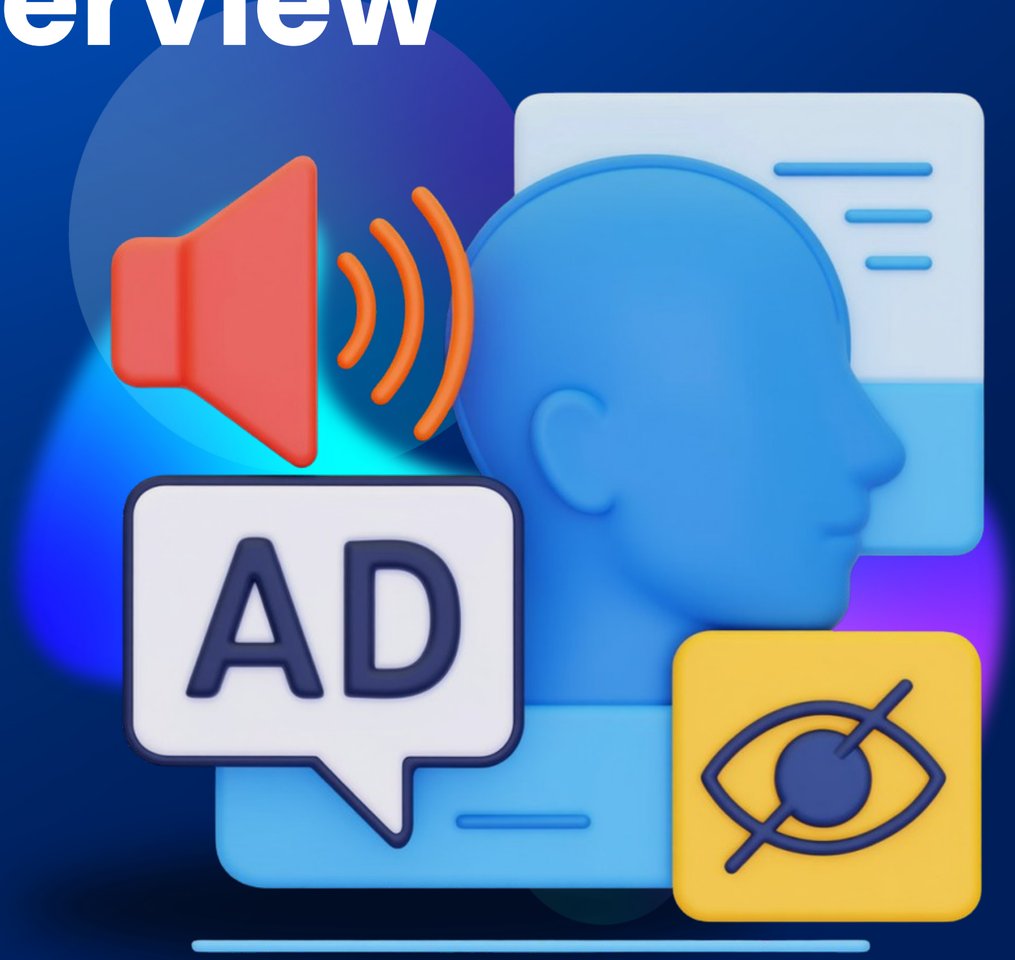
Together, they create truly inclusive video experiences.

Captioning Overview

- CC - Closed Caption (not to be confused with CCTV - Closed Circuit Television or video monitoring)
- Closed Caption - Encoded Captions - Captions that are embedded in the video stream, you have the ability to turn them on or off (open or close them)
- Open Caption - Decoded Captions - Captions that are burned into the video and cannot be turned off
- CEA-608 and CEA-708 - Standards set for closed captioning. CEA-608 or Line 21 caption is the standard for analog video. CEA-708 is the new standard for digital television.

Audio Description Overview

Audio Description (also called Video Description or Described Video) is a narrated track that **describes important visual elements in a video**. This includes actions, facial expressions, scene changes, on-screen text, gestures, and settings. It's then inserted into natural pauses in the dialogue.



It's like "alt text for video" for blind and low-vision audiences.

Goal: Provide equivalent access to visual information so everyone can follow and enjoy the content.

Compliance

FCC

- **Accurate:** Captions must match the spoken words in the dialogue and convey background noises and other sounds to the fullest extent possible.

- **Synchronous:** Captions must coincide with their corresponding spoken words and sounds to the greatest extent possible and must be displayed on the screen at a speed that can be read by viewers.

- **Complete:** Captions must run from the beginning to the end of the program to the fullest extent possible.

- **Properly placed:** Captions should not block other important visual content on the screen, overlap one another or run off the edge of the video screen.

Compliance

ADA

The purpose of the effective communication rules is to ensure that the person with a **vision, hearing, or speech disability can communicate with, receive information from, and convey information to, the covered entity.**

Covered entities **must provide auxiliary aids and services when needed** to communicate effectively with people who have communication disabilities.

The key to communicating effectively is to **consider the nature, length, complexity, and context** of the communication and the person's **normal method(s) of communication.**

The rules apply to communicating with **the person** who is receiving the covered entity's goods or services **as well as with that person's parent, spouse, or companion in appropriate circumstances.**

Upcoming WCAG Requirements & Compliance

WCAG 2.1 Success Criterion (Level AA)- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines:
Extended regulations for web and mobile app accessibility

Level AA (2.1): Offer either audio description or a full media alternative (e.g., transcript).

All content posted after the deadline must include audio descriptions.
*Archives are exempt, unless reposted after the deadline.

ADA Title II rule (U.S. state/local governments) requires WCAG 2.1 AA compliance. Major deadlines in April 2026 (large entities) and April 2027 (smaller entities).

Basic Principles of High-Quality Audio Description

Perceivable

Description of visual and non-visual aspects

- ex: A slide with annual budget - summarize the budget numbers on the slide
- ex: A public safety evacuation map - describe the evacuation routes

Operable

Be able to turn it on/ off

Understandable

Use clear, concise, plain language

Robust

Must be accessable through all devices

Standard Audio Description Workflow

01. Review the video - flag moments when AD is needed
- Within natural breaks in audio
- May happen before a speaker, if there are no breaks in the audio once they start speaking.

02. Write the script
- Stay objective
- Do not interpret meaning or emotion
- Stay in present tense
- Focus on key visual details - what you see, not what you assume

03. Review the script

04. Record the narration

05. Edit and align audio/ video timing

06. Upload completed video

Sample Automated Workflow for Captioning and Audio Description

Final Edit of content
(pre-captioned/ AD)

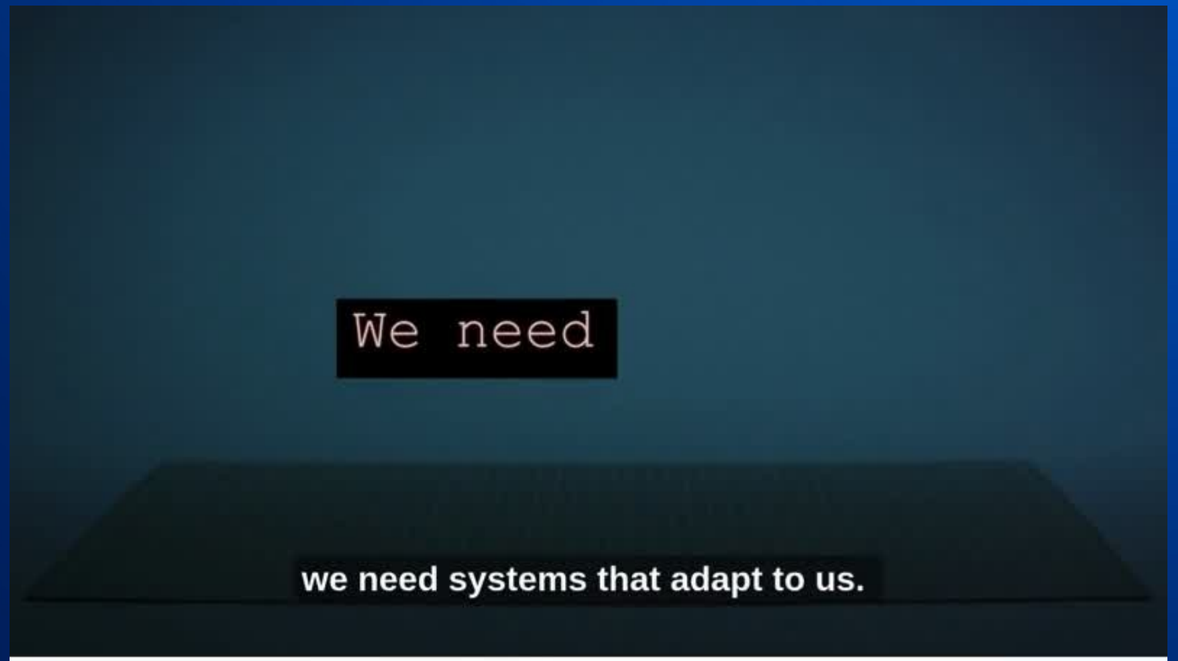
Send file for audio description
VZP- live AD
3 Play Media - automated/ live review
Create your own audio description

Automated Captioning
System Watchfolder

Creates a timestamped
transcript (SRT, SCC, WebVTT)

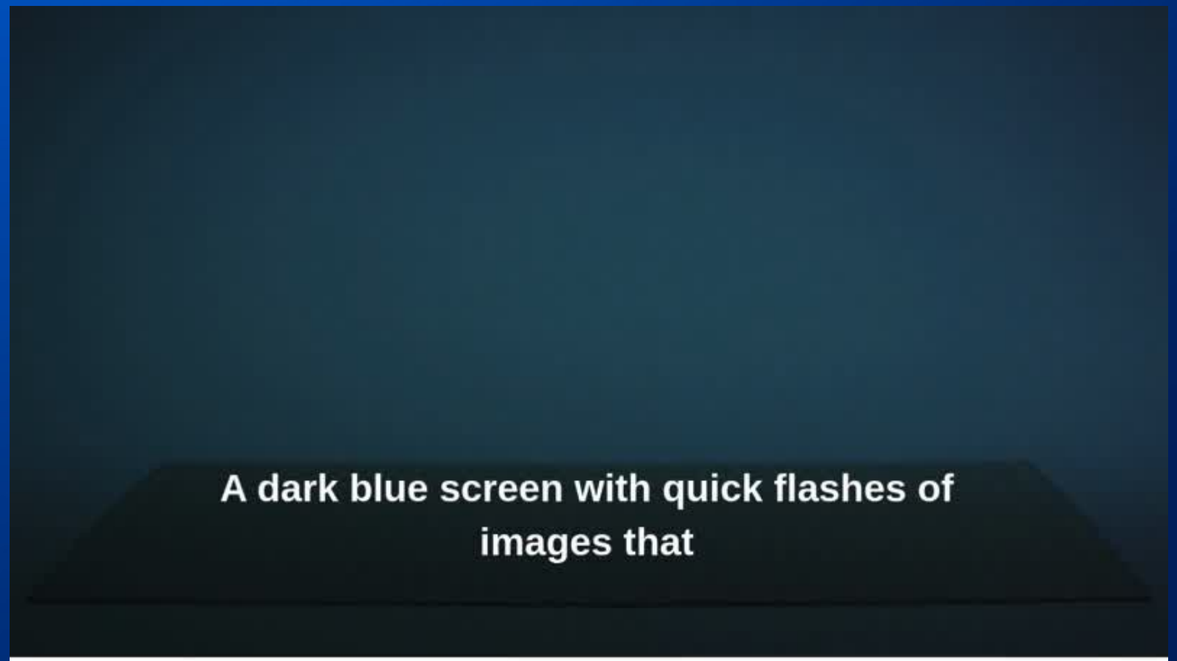
- Receive final AD/ CC file- review for accuracy
- Name files (caption and video AD files) the same

Upload to webpage and social media. May have to have two separate videos, one with AD and one without, if the platform doesn't allow a secondary audio track



Standard Audio Description

- Takes place in natural breaks in speech.
- May describe upcoming frames if no break exists.
- Description is clear, concise, and simple language.



Extended Audio Description

- Video is paused to describe key scene changes.
- Description is more detailed, using more descriptive language.
- May include description of upcoming scene changes.

Common Pitfalls

Limitations for Captioning

- Accents and dialects
- Background noise / poor audio
- Domain-specific jargon, proper nouns, technical terms
- Homophones and context errors
- Real-time challenges - latency vs. accuracy
- Legacy broadcast challenges

For Audio Description:

- Over-describing (too wordy) or under-describing (missing key visuals).
- Subjective language instead of objective facts.
- Poor timing that overlaps important dialogue or sound effects.
- High cost and time if not planned in advance.
- Legacy broadcast challenges apply here too (secondary audio channels/SAP, integration issues).

The Legacy Broadcast Problem

- Legacy standards (e.g., CEA-608/708 in North America, Teletext, DVB subtitles)
- Closed vs open captions, timing precision, character limits.
- Integration friction: Many playout systems weren’t built for modern outputs.
- Regulatory requirements vs practical reality.

AI and Accessibility – Overcoming Pitfalls

01. Human-in-the-loop review (target 95–98% accuracy).

02. Custom models / fine tuning.

03. Phased integration - start with files, then move to live content.

04. Tools that bridge old and new (converters, middleware).

The Future of Captioning and Audio Description

Key Advancements

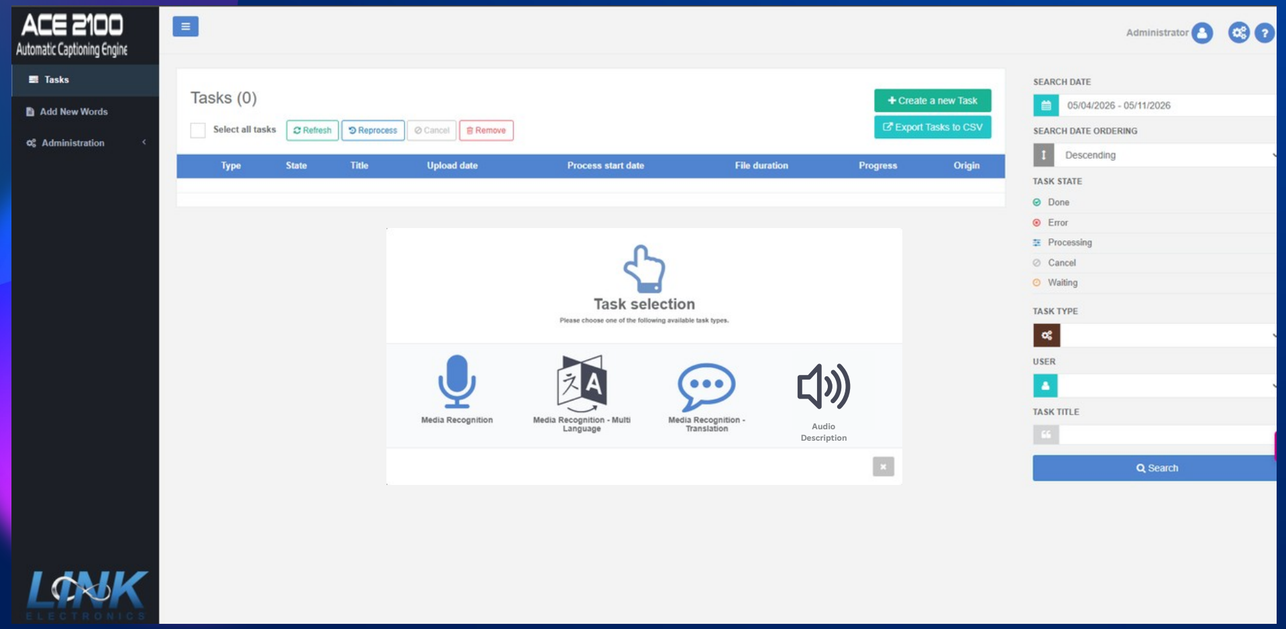
THE WHAT:

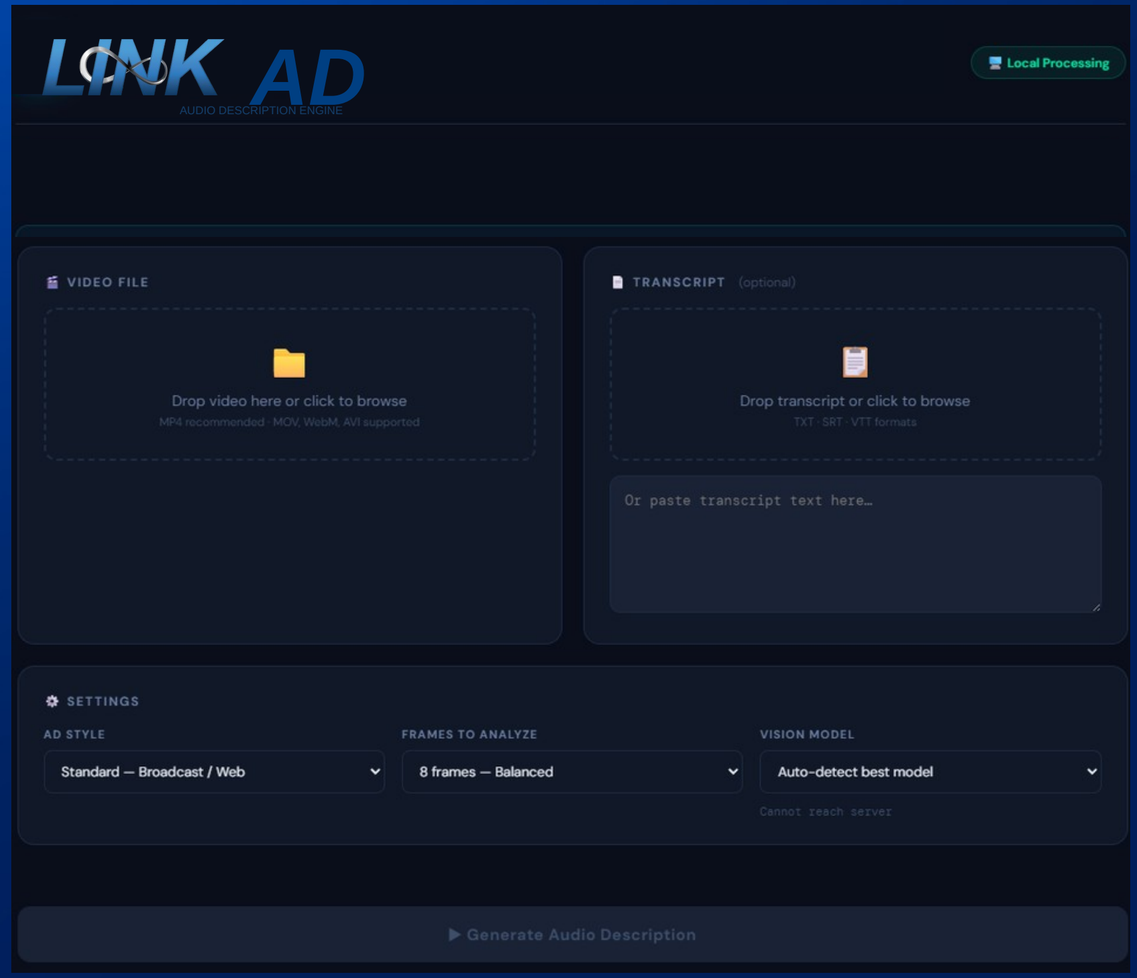
- Real-time multilingual translation + localization.
- Automatic speaker identification (colors/names).
- Enhanced descriptions (sound effects, tone, music cues) → “described video”.
- Emotion/context awareness.
- Personalized captions (font size, speed, language, simplified versions).

THE HOW:

- Generative AI for faster editing and quality improvement.
- Beyond compliance: Captions as engagement tools (searchable, interactive, educational).
- Advanced multi-modal AI processing of video and audio for audio descriptions
- Faster processing for quicker turn around times
- Inter-connected or multi-use platforms to combine captioning and audio description into one platform

The Future of Captioning and Audio Description





Key Takeaways

01. Start with audio quality and context for best AI results.

02. Build hybrid workflows (AI + human oversight).

03. Bridge legacy systems thoughtfully.

04. Think beyond compliance — captions drive engagement.

05. Begin small, measure, then scale.

Thank You

Have questions? Reach out anytime!

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