

Video Description

Video description is audio-narrated descriptions of a television program's key visual elements. These descriptions are inserted into natural pauses in the program's dialogue. Video description makes TV programming more accessible to individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

Availability of video description

FCC rules require local TV station affiliates of ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC located in the top 60 TV markets to provide 87.5 hours per calendar quarter (about 7 hours per week) of video-described programming, of which 50 hours must be prime time and/or children's programming and 37.5 hours may be any type of programming shown between 6:00 a.m. and midnight.

- Local affiliates of ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC in markets smaller than the top 60 also usually provide video description. Check with your local TV stations.
- Many Public Broadcasting System stations also provide video description on a number of programs. Check with your local PBS station.

Subscription TV systems (offered over cable, satellite or the telephone network) with 50,000 or more subscribers must provide 87.5 hours per calendar quarter (about 7 hours per week) of video-described programming on the top five most-watched non-broadcast networks, of which 50 hours must be prime time and/or children's programming and 37.5 hours may be any type of programming shown between 6:00 a.m. and midnight.

- The top five non-broadcast networks are Discovery, HGTV, History, TBS, and USA.
- Subscription TV systems with fewer than 50,000 subscribers also usually provide video description. Check with your subscription TV provider.

Broadcast TV stations and subscription TV systems must also pass through video description received with their programs unless the secondary audio stream is being used for another purpose related to the programming.

How to access video description

Video description is provided through the TV or set top box "secondary audio" feature, which some TV controls identify as "SAP" or "secondary audio program." The secondary audio may also be identified as a language feature, such as "Spanish" or "SPA," because it is also used to provide Spanish or other language translations of English language TV programs. Depending upon the program being viewed, when listening to the secondary audio, you may hear the primary audio with video description, Spanish or other language translation, a duplicate of the primary audio, or silence.

Your TV user manual may provide information about activating the secondary audio feature, or you may contact the customer service department where you bought the TV or the customer service department of the TV manufacturer for assistance. If you have a set top box for subscription TV service, you may contact your subscription TV provider for assistance in activating the secondary audio.

In addition, the FCC established accessibility requirements for televisions, set-top boxes, and similar devices that receive or play back video programming and are manufactured, leased, or requested after December 20, 2016. For more information see our consumer guide on accessible Television and Set-Top Box Controls, Menus, and Program Guides at www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/accessible-tv-and-set-top-box-controls-menus-and-program-guides.

Learn more

Networks, broadcasters and subscription TV systems may provide information about the availability of programs with video description through their websites and in program guides. Similar resources are available on our video description webpage at www.fcc.gov/general/video-description.

Filing a complaint

If you have any problems accessing video description, you have multiple options for filing a complaint with the FCC:

- File a complaint online at <https://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov>
- By phone: 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322); TTY: 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322); ASL: 1-844-432-2275
- By mail (please include your name, address, contact information and as much detail about your complaint as possible):

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

Alternate formats

To request this article in an accessible format - braille, large print, Word or text document or audio - write or call us at the address or phone number at the bottom of the page or send an email to fcc504@fcc.gov.

For more information

For more information about FCC programs to promote access for people with disabilities, visit the FCC's Disability Rights Office website at www.fcc.gov/disability.

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