Closed Captions

Activation:
Captions are turned on and off using the decoder (in the NTSC TV set menus, within the TV receiver box, or in software player preferences). They are not controlled via DVD menus. Not all users know how to turn on captions.

Support:
Most standard-def TVs have caption decoding capability. Most computer DVD player softwares do not.

Software players that are known to support closed caption decoding:
- Paid versions of WinDVD
- Paid versions of PowerDVD
- InterActual Player
- Windows Media Player v.10+, though timing errors are common.
- Apple DVD Player can decode some caption styles. It will not decode roll-up captions. The positioning information for pop on is not decoded properly.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Communities:
The Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities are used to the look, feel, and use of closed captions. They will often have the closed captioning set permanently to ON on their television so that captions automatically display if they are available, and they generally account for captioning capability when purchasing TVs and DVD players. However, deaf users have reported frustrating experiences trying to play captioned DVDs on computers, laptops, or HDTVs.

Appearance:
The caption font is determined by the decoder, but it will generally be monospace white text on a black background.

Stability:
Each closed caption must be parsed by the decoder before it can be drawn on the screen. They can be disrupted by noise - characters can be dropped, position codes altered.

Number of Available Streams:
Only one caption stream is available on DVD (CC1). Different caption streams are available on broadcast television (CC1-CC4), but there are technical limitations that often cause them to interfere with each other. Not televisions support CC2, 3, and 4.

Compatibility:
Available for NTSC only. PAL and Blu-ray formats must use subtitles.

Subtitles

Activation:
Subtitles are turned on and off via DVD menu options. They are not a good option on “play-all” DVDs, for which there are no menus.

Support:
All DVD players support subtitles.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Communities:
Subtitles can be written to make material accessible to the Deaf and hard of hearing audience, but the creator needs to be instructed to do so, and the packaging should indicate “Subtitles for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (SDH)” or similar language.

Appearance:
For most subtitle formats, any font is possible, and the usual choice for English is a large sans-serif font, either white or yellow with contrasting black edging. For some formats, black boxing similar to that used by CC can be created.

Stability:
Generally stable - they are time-cued graphic overlays.

Number of Available Streams:
32 subtitle tracks are available on a standard DVD.

Compatibility:
Compatible with PAL DVDs and Blu-ray discs.