

## Audio Description

Audio 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. Audio description makes TV programming more accessible to individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

In 2020, the FCC announced expanded audio description requirements. Audio description is required for an additional 10 designated market areas (DMAs) each year for the next four years. That is, the audio description requirements extended to DMAs 101 through 110 on January 1, 2025, and to DMAs 111 through 120 on January 1, 2026.

In 2023, the Commission adopted rules to expand its audio description requirements to an additional 10 DMAs per year until all remaining DMAs are covered. Specifically, the Commission decided to continue the phase-in with DMAs 101 through 110 on January 1, 2025, extending to 10 additional DMAs per year until the phase-in concludes with DMAs 201 through 210 on January 1, 2035.

### Availability of audio description

FCC rules require local TV station affiliates of ABC, CBS, Fox, and NBC located in the top 110 TV markets to provide 87.5 hours per calendar quarter (about 7 hours per week) of audio-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 110 also usually provide audio description. Check with your local TV stations.
- Many Public Broadcasting System stations also provide audio 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 audio-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 TLC, HGTV, Hallmark, TNT, and TBS.
- Subscription TV systems with fewer than 50,000 subscribers also usually provide audio description. Check with your subscription TV provider.

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

## How to access audio description

Audio 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 audio 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](#).

## Learn more

Networks, broadcasters and subscription TV systems may provide information about the availability of programs with audio description through their websites and in program guides. Similar resources are available on our audio [description webpage](#).

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