

# THE CART CAPTIONER'S MANUAL



## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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Prepared by the National Court Reporters Association Broadcast and CART Captioning Committee.

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# INTRODUCTION

Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) is a word-for-word speech-to-text interpreting service for people who need communication access. Unlike computerized note taking or abbreviation systems, which summarize information for consumers, CART provides a complete translation of all spoken words and environmental sounds, empowering consumers to decide for themselves what information is important to them. CART consumers include people with hearing loss, individuals with cognitive or motor challenges, anyone desiring to improve reading/language skills, and those with other communication barriers. The Americans with Disabilities Act specifically recognizes CART as an assistive technology that allows for effective communication access.

A CART captioner supplies instant speech-to-text translation on a computer monitor or other display for the benefit of an individual consumer or larger group in a number of settings: classrooms; business, government, or educational functions; courtrooms; and religious, civic, cultural, recreation, or entertainment events.

A CART captioner is sensitive to the varying needs of consumers and has had training in conveying a speaker's message, complete with environmental cues. This expertise distinguishes a CART captioner from a court reporter in a traditional litigation setting.

CART captioners should earn certification to objectively demonstrate their skills and knowledge. NCRA's Certified Realtime Captioner (CRC) certification is a nationally recognized standard. The CRC combines a workshop, a written knowledge test, and a skills test focused on the requirements demanded of a competent CART or broadcast captioner. The Certified Realtime Reporter (CRR) and Registered Professional Reporter (RPR) certifications may also demonstrate an individual's capability to perform the required work. However, while the CRR requires a skills test and the RPR requires a written knowledge and skills tests, neither tests an individual's knowledge of or capacity to provide CART with the specificity offered by the CRC Exam.

For more information on the qualifications expected of a professional CART captioner, please review NCRA's policy on providing quality CART services and the CART Consumer Bill of Rights, which are listed at the end of this document under *Resources*.

# PROFESSIONALISM

## Sensitivity

The CART captioner has general knowledge about the sub-groups of people with hearing loss, including but not limited to culturally Deaf, late deafened (becoming deaf postlingually), oral deaf, and hard of hearing. The CART captioner should understand how a person with hearing loss prefers to communicate.

There is a certain etiquette required when communicating with CART consumers. A CART captioner should get training in communication techniques through court reporting association seminars, disability agencies, sign language courses, etc. A CART captioner may also hold membership in organizations such as the Association of Late-Deafened Adults, Self-Help for Hard of Hearing People, and the National Association of the Deaf.

CART trainees may be present at an assignment with a CART captioner to gain on-the-job experience only after the CART captioner secures the consent of the consumer and client.

CART is provided in a variety of settings ranging from medical appointments, church meetings, funerals, programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous, and police interrogations. Personal settings can be emotionally charged. A CART captioner should have self-discipline, self-motivation, and the ability to manage stress and control emotions.

Additionally, projecting CART to an audience helps to educate others about CART technology and its uses. The CART captioner should maintain a positive attitude when responding to questions.

The CART captioner should always dress appropriately for the assignment's setting. For example, business attire on a college campus may not be necessary and may make the consumer feel conspicuous.

The CART captioner should be aware of the sign language interpreter's role. An interpreter will often serve individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing who prefer using sign language or voice for a nonoral individual. The CART captioner and interpreter work as a team, never in competition.

## **Staying in role**

A CART captioner's role is to facilitate communication. The CART captioner will always stay in role and perform in a manner appropriate to the situation. A CART captioner should decline any invitation or suggestion by participants and the consumer to comment, interject, advise, or respond to inquiries or to in any way become involved in the assignment outside the role of CART captioner. If necessary, the CART captioner should politely explain the necessity to stay in role.

A CART captioner may be asked to step out of role to answer questions about the service, to demonstrate equipment during a break, or to schedule future dates. Deviations from the role are the exception and are discouraged. Any deviations need the the consumer's approval.

The CART captioner must be discrete in situations that require interrupting the proceedings to ensure the integrity of the CART translation. CART captioners must take care not to call undue attention to the consumer or themselves.

At the consumer's request, the CART captioner may voice for the consumer in order to facilitate communication.

## **Impartiality**

The CART captioner must be fair and impartial to each participant in all aspects of CART and be alert to conflicts of interest. Such circumstances may include, for example, an assignment involving a participant who is a close friend, family member, or business associate. The CART captioner must disclose any potential conflict of interest or inability to be impartial upfront so he or she is not challenged on bias later.

## **Confidentiality**

Courtesy and discretion are required of the CART captioner at all times. A casual word or action may betray a consumer's confidences or violate a client's privacy. The CART captioner must keep the consumer's information confidential and private.

## **Professional development**

The CART captioner should be informed of current trends, laws, literature, and technological advances relating to CART captioning.

## SKILLS

The following categories outline the minimum foundational skills necessary for providing proficient and professional CART service.

### Preparation and professional practice

The CART captioner works closely with the consumer, meeting coordinator, classroom teacher, or other appropriate individual to obtain all terminology relating to the assignment. The CART captioner must also research related documents (curricula, syllabi, synopses, scripts, texts, meeting agendas, conference programs, and organization or company websites) to create a job dictionary and enhance the master dictionary.

Before beginning any assignment, a CART captioner should enter speaker identifiers into the job dictionary. Use generic markers (i.e., >> SPEAKER:) for an unidentified speaker. Speaker identification varies from setting to setting.

Before providing CART service, establish a clear understanding of who is hiring the CART captioner and whether the CART captioner will preserve an electronic file of the roughly edited text with a disclaimer. The contents of the computer file may be deemed proprietary and should not be distributed without proper authorization. If providing the file, the CART captioner should also make sure all participants know that an electronic file of the roughly edited text with a disclaimer will be preserved and clarify who is entitled to receive a copy of said file.

Insert the following or similar language at the beginning and end of each file:

*This text is being provided in a rough draft format. Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) is provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility and may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings.*

A CART captioner should have multiple ways to communicate with CART consumers and meeting planners, such as a TTY, fax machine, and/or email. A CART captioner should also know how to use the telephone relay system to contact a CART consumer.

## **Realtime writing**

The CART captioner writes conflict free, includes punctuation, and sustains accuracy for long periods of time. Precise writing and word building often require the CART captioner to use discrete outlines for prefixes, suffixes, and root words. Consistency in writing steno outlines increases accuracy and readability. Word-boundary problems (i.e., contractor/contract or) must be resolved.

The CRC Skills Test is literary matter at 180 wpm, but a CART captioner should be comfortable with higher realtime speeds. This allows the CART captioner time to add job defines and fingerspell. It is essential that the CART captioner can create and retain realtime job defines on the fly.

Use a foolproof number system. The CART captioner should be able to write numbers to translate as words (nine), Roman numerals (IX), cardinal numbers (9), and ordinal numbers (9th).

Know how to fingerspell (writing words letter by letter). In order to differentiate between initials, words that are spelled out by a speaker, and acronyms, the CART captioner should use discrete-spelling alphabets. Fingerspelled words should always translate with the appropriate spacing.

## **Dictionary maintenance**

CART captioners must be familiar with and continually grow the contents of their main dictionaries and job dictionaries. Regularly enter names, terms, and places related to current events and culture into the dictionaries.

Frequently back up dictionaries and know how to import and export ASCII and RTF files.



## **Software/computer knowledge**

The CART captioner must operate a computer-aided transcription (CAT) program and understand its realtime translation and display functions. Know how to troubleshoot and solve hardware, software, and other technical problems.

In order to meet consumer preferences, the CART captioner must know how to activate upper/lowercase, colored backgrounds, enlarged text, and other display options to ensure the professional presentation of all text.

Brackets should not appear around untranslated words. Phonetic translations should appear in the same color as the text. Nontext areas should be the same color as the background.

During realtime, use the phonetics table so that untranslates do not appear. CART captioners should customize the phonetics table to their steno theory.

When appropriate, the CART captioner can furnish the computer file of the session text as requested. Ideally, do a rough edit to remove any untranslates and glaring mistranslates before delivering the text.

Simultaneous display is a function of the computer. Not all computers support simultaneous display. A CART captioner must know how to switch between the computer's LCD screen and the external device (i.e., television monitor, projector). Turn off or block the external device display while making job defines.

## **Language comprehension**

Knowledge of grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, spelling, vocabulary, high-frequency colloquialisms, and slang is crucial. The CART captioner must listen for continuity, sense, and detail of the proceedings, anticipating and preventing errors in translation.

## **Research**

Research, job dictionary preparation, and material organization are very important to successful CART. Organize agendas, job dictionaries, name lists, prepared speeches, printouts of media presentations, lists of steno outlines, and briefs, and place them in a conspicuous place for quick reference while writing realtime. Each job is unique and requires its own research and organization.

# LOCATION SETUP

## Positioning

Room setup considerations include:

- **Lighting:** Overhead lights, uncovered windows, or mirrors may cause glare on the screen. Consider these influences when choosing a place to sit.
- **Seat location:** When choosing a place to sit, be guided by the consumer's preference as well as lines of sight to overheads, slides, blackboards, and other media displays.
- Coordinate with sign language interpreters, speakers, audiovisual technicians, consumers, and other ancillary workers.

Keep equipment and cords out of frequently used aisles and pathways.

When providing large-screen CART, the CART captioner is often located near the projector, platform, lectern, or sound mixer board.

## Display options

Before the assignment, discuss and arrange for display options with the CART consumer and/or client. Some of the display options include:

- Laptop, computer, or tablet for one-on-one CART
- TV to serve up to three or four people, depending on the screen size
  - Several TVs can be placed around the room, and the signal can be sent from one TV to another in a daisy chain.
- Large screen with a front or rear projector
  - Projectors are normally positioned to display forward onto a screen. A rear projector will display the image onto the screen from behind it, eliminating the problem of people walking between the projector and screen and blocking the image. The screens can vary in size, from a 4x4' to a 10x10' screen. A single consumer may prefer a large-screen projection display to allow for more participation and interactivity with the group as a whole.
- LED display, often used during theater productions and graduations

## **Films and videos**

Films and videos are shown frequently in classrooms and other settings. Uncaptioned films need to be realtime translated. Some suggested tokens are:

>> MAN:

>> WOMAN:

>> VOICE:

>> NARRATOR:

>> CHILD:

Televisions made after June 1993 have built-in decoder chips for caption display. Some videos and television programs are already captioned, so know how to turn on the caption feature.

## **Seating**

For comfort and stress reduction, find a suitable chair without an attached desk. The CART captioner may need to take a portable stand for the computer.

## **Access to electricity**

Carry an extension cord, a surge protector, and a 3-to-2 ground cord adapter. For everyone's safety, secure electrical cords with duct or gaffer's tape.

## **Audio**

Sometimes ambient room noise or the sound of the projector detracts from otherwise good audio. The CART captioner can use an assistive listening device.

The CART captioner can also pull audio off the audio mixer board with headphones, preferably ones with volume adjustment.

## THE LEGAL SETTING

CART may be provided in a court or deposition proceeding for a litigant, juror, judge, attorney, witness, or other participant. The court reporter for a trial or deposition and the CART captioner perform different functions. For example, a CART captioner may accompany a consumer into the jury room or into confidential discussions with attorneys.

Additionally, when providing communication access, the CART captioner must include parentheticals to describe environmental sounds (i.e., alarm ringing), laughter, or anything that detracts attention from the proceeding. Synonyms may be necessary for effective communication. The synonyms and environmental sounds would not ordinarily appear in an official certified verbatim transcript.

Before the proceedings begin, the CART captioner should discuss with the judge and attorneys his or her role as an interpreter and agree on a method of interrupting if the CART captioner cannot hear or understand a speaker.

Clearly establish:

- who is hiring the CART captioner,
- the CART captioner's role in assisting with communication (as opposed to the official reporter's role of providing a verbatim record),
- the fact that no roughly edited electronic file is to be produced, and
- the need to preserve the unedited text file with a disclaimer (as suggested previously) in accordance with statute or court order or for a period of no fewer than five years.

In a confidential setting (i.e., legal discussions, jury deliberations, attorney/client discussions), the display should not be visible to others. The CART captioner should delete all files immediately after the assignment unless requested not to do so or ordered by the Court.

A CART captioner should not serve as both official reporter and CART captioner. However, when no other option exists, the role performed is that of the official reporter.

## BROADCAST CAPTIONING

While broadcast captioning falls under the CART umbrella in its broadest sense — communication access — it is considered a separate specialty. The software, hardware, and technical knowledge base will not be addressed in this document. See *CaptioningMatters.org* for additional references.

## REMOTE CART

For remote CART, the captioner is in one location and the consumer is in another. The CART captioner listens to voices via the phone or over the Internet, translates the speech to text in realtime, and transmits the text to a designated URL, Web page, Internet site, or other location or device. This is particularly helpful in areas with a lack of CART captioners. Special technical training and support is necessary when providing this service. For equipment requirements, see the next section.

When providing remote CART:

- Speakers should be identified whenever possible. It is often helpful to at least lock onto the moderator's voice.
- When others join the call, there is often a bell or beep. Indicate this in the text.
- Note all environmental sounds, including "silence" or "papers shuffling."
- When audio is not discernible, write a parenthetical such as "(inaudible)" to let the consumer know there are audio difficulties.
- With the consumer's permission, the remote CART captioner may interrupt the session and ask for a repeat or for a microphone to be readjusted.

Speakerphones with extension microphones are often used for remote CART or a speaker may wear a wireless microphone with the speakerphone. Other options for acquiring audio for remote CART are: Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), instant messaging audio, or a phone line.

# EQUIPMENT

It is important to keep current with rapidly advancing technologies in order to meet consumer preferences. The following is a listing of the displays known at this time for CART.

The CART captioner should furnish and know how to operate all equipment necessary for basic display. Backup equipment, computer, and software key/code should be readily available.

Asterisked items are recommended but not required.

## Basic display

- stenotype machine with realtime cable
- CAT/realtime software
- CDs\*
- surge protector with indicator light
- 3-prong to 2-prong ground cord adapter
- duct or gaffer's tape for taping down cables
- notebook computer tray/tripod\*
- chair (make arrangements)\*
- notebook computer
- text-enlarging capability
- extension cord
- additional realtime cable
- 25-foot realtime cable\*
- equipment case with wheels\*
- infrared/FM listening device\*

## Advanced display

The CART captioner or the hiring party may supply some or all of the additional equipment necessary for the following displays. In all cases, before accepting an assignment to display with external monitors or equipment, the CART captioner must establish and test hardware and software compatibility.

## Computer monitor display

- splitter box for additional monitors
- 25-foot monitor cables
- multi-line block or digital sharing device (for realtime)

## Television display

- digital signal converter (computer to television)
- coaxial cable to daisy chain multiple TV monitors

## Projection screen display

- LCD projector
- projection screen
- extra projector light bulbs (must know how to replace)

## LED display

- LED message boards in various sizes and colors for indoor use
- LED message board for outdoor use

## Encoded display

May be used for closed-circuit sites such as conventions or classrooms.

- captioning software (requires training)
- encoder or character generator
- camera
- BNC cables
- null modem cable and/or modem

## Remote CART

- telephone line(s)
- emergency contact capability (cell phone, instant messaging, etc.)
- high-speed Internet connection
- voice/data modem (for use with single phone line)
- special microphone (for speaker)
- CAT software that supports remote CART
- communication software (computer to computer)

## COMPENSATION

The CART captioner will request compensation for services and ascertain particulars of billing/payment in a professional and judicious manner. Arrange details regarding payment for CART service, text files, etc. in advance.

## GETTING STARTED

Court reporters interested in getting started as CART captioners should review the content available on *CaptioningMatters.org*. If you have additional questions, contact NCRA's Member Services and Information Center at 800-272-6272 or [msic@ncra.org](mailto:msic@ncra.org).

## RESOURCES

CART Guidelines:

[ncra.org/docs/default-source/uploadedfiles/governmentrelations/guidelines-for-cart-captioners.pdf](http://ncra.org/docs/default-source/uploadedfiles/governmentrelations/guidelines-for-cart-captioners.pdf)

CART Consumer Bill of Rights:

[ncra.org/cart-consumer-bill-of-rights](http://ncra.org/cart-consumer-bill-of-rights)

[CaptioningMatters.org](http://CaptioningMatters.org)

Captioners Code of Professional Ethics:

[ncra.org/captioners-code-of-professional-ethics](http://ncra.org/captioners-code-of-professional-ethics)



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