



GUIDANCE

GUIDANCE DPP012

COMMERCIAL, SPONSORSHIP, & INFORMERCIAL DELIVERY

GUIDANCE FOR PRODUCTION AND POST-PRODUCTION

Abstract

This document provides guidance for the production and post-production of HD commercials, sponsorships, and infomercials for delivery to broadcasters that have adopted this guidance.

Adhering to the best practices outlined in this document can help ensure that content is accepted by broadcasters.

The document presents guidance as follows:

Video – Quality, field dominance, video levels and PSE compliance

Audio – Quality and loudness compliance

Accessibility – Captions and audio description

Timeline – Layout

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1 VIDEO

1.1 Video Quality

- The picture must be well lit, and reasonably, but not artificially, sharp.
- The picture must be free of excessive noise, grain and digital compression artefacts.
- The picture must be free of excessive flare, reflections, lens dirt, markings and obstructions (e.g. lens hood), and lens aberrations.
- Movement must appear reasonably smooth and continuous and must not give rise to distortions or break-up to moving objects or cause large changes in resolution.
- The picture must be free of excessive black crushing and highlight compression. Hard clipping of highlights (e.g. by legalisers) must not cause visible artefacts on screen.
- There must be no noticeable horizontal or vertical aliasing, i.e. jagged lines, or field or frame rate fluctuations in fine detail.
- Colour rendition, especially skin tones, must be consistent throughout, and a realistic representation of the scene portrayed unless it is altered as an editorially essential visual effect.
- The picture must be stable and continuous - i.e. no jumps, movements, or shifts in level or position.
- There must be no visible contouring/artefacts caused by digital processing. Quantisation noise must not be apparent.
- There must be no noticeable spurious signals or artefacts e.g. streaking, ringing, smear, echoes, overshoots, moiré, hum, crosstalk.

1.2 Post-Production

To support **smooth pursuit eye movement** and prevent unacceptable judder (especially during DVE moves, wipes, text crawls, and dissolves) electronically generated graphics must be rendered and presented in the same format as video (progressive or interlaced).

1.3 Field Dominance

If interlaced, cuts in material must happen on frame boundaries (i.e. between field 2 and field 1). Motion on psf material must always occur between field 2 and field 1 (i.e. field 1 dominance).

1.4 Video Levels and Gamut (illegal signals)

High-Definition digital signals will be assessed according to the recommendation **BT.709-6**: 'Parameter values for the HDTV standards for production and international programme exchange'.

Video levels must lie within the specified limits so that the material can be used without adjustment.

1.5 Frame Rate Conversion

To prevent image degradation, Motion Compensation standards conversion sometimes known as Motion Predictive or Motion Vector Conversion should normally be used.

Speed change is the preferred method of converting from 24fps (including 23.976fps) to 25fps. Due attention must be given to the audio.

Software standards conversion packages should also use Motion Compensation processing. It is not permitted to use simple “timeline” conversion. Contact the broadcaster for more information.

1.6 Photosensitive Epilepsy (PSE)

Flickering or intermittent lights and certain types of repetitive visual patterns can cause serious problems for viewers who are prone to photosensitive epilepsy. Children & teenagers are particularly vulnerable.

Commercials must adhere to the following Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice (BCAP) rule:

BCAP Rule 4.6 - Advertisements must not include visual effects or techniques that are likely to adversely affect members of the audience with photosensitive epilepsy.

Commercials, sponsorships, and infomercials for file delivery must be tested using any file-based PSE device that meets the **Ofcom Guidance Notes: Section 2, Annex 1** - Guidance Note on Flashing Images and Regular Patterns in Television.

All copies delivered to broadcasters must pass a PSE (Photosensitive Epilepsy) test conducted with a tool that complies with the **ITU-R BT.1702-2** or **ITU-R BT.1702-3** recommendation. **ITU-R BT.1702-3** will be mandatory as soon as it is widely available in testing tools.

It is recommended that the PSE test is performed on the **final video format (AS-11)** of the deliverable, and the delivery of a PSE test certificate is also recommended to prevent multiple tests with different results.

Please note - **Clearcast** operates a PSE checking service on the clearance ingest master submitted for regulatory approval of commercial content.

Any failure whatsoever will result in rejection of the commercial or sponsorship, and any affected sections must be repaired and re-tested before acceptance.

2 AUDIO

2.1 Audio Quality

- Sound must be recorded with appropriately placed microphones, giving minimum background noise and without peak distortion.
- The audio must be free of spurious signals such as clicks, noise, hum and any analogue distortion.
- The audio must be reasonably continuous and smoothly mixed and edited.
- Audio levels must be appropriate to the scene portrayed and dynamic range must not be excessive; it must be suitable for the whole range of domestic listening situations.
- Stereo audio must be appropriately balanced and free from phase differences, which cause audible cancellation in mono.
- The audio must not show dynamic and/or frequency response artefacts as a result of the action of noise reduction or low-bit-rate coding systems.
- Sound must meet [R128](#) loudness specifications.

2.2 Loudness

All commercials, infomercials and sponsorship material must be compliant with the Material Loudness and Maximum True Peak requirements below.

2.3 Loudness Terms, Measurements and DPP Delivery Requirements

The measurement of audio is based on the EBU Recommendation [R128](#). The terms used in this document, how they are measured, and the DPP delivery requirements are listed below. *R128 S1* should be used for commercials and *R128* for infomercials and teleshopping.

Term	Description	Measurement	Reference
LU	Loudness Unit	1LU = 1dB change in loudness	EBU Tech 3343
LUFS	Loudness Unit relative to Full Scale	LUFS	EBU Tech 3343
LRA	Loudness Range	LU	EBU Tech 3342

DPP DELIVERY REQUIREMENTS			
Term	Description	Measurement	Reference
Material Loudness (EBU Tech 3343)	The loudness measured over the duration of the commercial.	LUFS	Target Programme Loudness ¹ -23.0 LUFS ±0.2LU
Maximum True Peak (EBU Tech 3343)	The maximum value of the audio signal waveform.	dBTP (True Peak)	It is recommended that the maximum true peak level should not exceed -3dBTP. Content will fail if the maximum true peak exceeds -1dBTP.
Maximum Short Term (EBU R128 s1)	Maximum Permitted Short-term Loudness level measured in compliance with EBU Tech 3341 .	LUFS	Maximum Short-term Loudness -18.0 LUFS (+5.0 LU on the relative scale)

2.4 Loudness Terms, Measurements and DPP Delivery Requirements

The following table describes best practice on true peak levels of different types of audio. At all times dialogue should be distinct and clear.

Material	Recommended Maximum Peaks
Uncompressed Music	-3 dBTP
Compressed Music (depending on degree of compression)	-10 dBTP
Heavy M & E (gunshots, warfare, aircraft, loud traffic, etc.)	-3 dBTP
Background M & E (office/street noise, light mood music etc.)	-18 dBTP

2.5 Metering Requirements

Meters must comply with the specifications in [EBU Tech 3341](#). Commercials must be measured using the EBU Integrated (I) mode and the measurement must be applied to the whole commercial ([EBU Tech 3343](#) Section 5).

¹ Although the target loudness is -23 LUFS, in exceptional circumstances lower target levels may be permitted by agreement with the broadcaster as outlined in Section 8. Other lower target levels must be agreed in advance with the broadcaster before the final mix

2.6 Exception Process for Intentionally Quiet Commercials, Sponsorships, & Infomercials

Intentionally Quiet content refers to when your content is deliberately creatively quiet and therefore does not meet the EBU **R128** target level.

Content that is intentionally quiet needs to be denoted when supplied to a Broadcaster and the following process should be adhered to for any such content. There are two different classifications of intentionally quiet.

These are:

1. The content is intentionally below the EBU **R128** sound levels for example where content has no dialogue but may contain low level sound effects.
2. The content is completely silent containing no audio or sound.

If your content is intentionally quiet or completely mute, it is recommended that this is denoted on the Clock slate.

As part of your delivery service and as part of the clearance process you will be asked to flag whether the content is Intentionally Quiet and which classification it is.

Classification 1 should be defined as Creatively and Intentionally Quiet.

Classification 2 should be defined as Creatively and Intentionally Silent.

This is to ensure that the onward exception processes the broadcasters require for this content can be appropriately managed by your delivery supplier and broadcaster.

3 ACCESSIBILITY

3.1 Accessibility Requirements

Advertising agencies producing commercials are encouraged to provide appropriate access services where possible.

The **Equalities Act 2010** (formerly the Disability Discrimination Act) requires service providers to take positive steps to make their services accessible to people with disabilities. It states that where a service provider offers or provides services to members of the public, the provider will have to take such steps as is reasonable to make it easier for disabled people to make use of the service. Broadcasters are service providers, and the Act therefore applies. (**DCMS Guidance 2010** – Television Access Services for People with Sensory Impairments)

Advertising agencies producing commercials are therefore required to consider the needs of people with hearing or visual impairments while generating captions, subtitles and graphics, using voiceovers, and while mixing sound. The **Communications Act 2003** sets targets for broadcasters (monitored by Ofcom) to provide subtitling, sign language and audio description services for long-form programming.

Public service broadcasters strongly recommend subtitling all commercials with spoken words and producing audio description where possible. Guidance for improving accessibility can be found at **Ad Accessibility**.

3.2 Subtitles

Subtitles shall be produced following **Ofcom's Accessibility Best Practice Guidelines**.

Subtitles, like the picture and sound of the commercial, shall follow the BCAP and CAP code.

3.3 Audio Description (AD)

Audio description shall provide narration for blind and visually impaired consumers, conveying contextually important visual elements in the picture.

Audio description shall be produced following the Ofcom best practice guidelines

Audio description similarly to the picture and sound of the commercial shall follow the BCAP and CAP code and shall be approved by an independent clearance organization.

The audio description shall be produced as a two-channel Audio Description Studio Signal, featuring mono narration and a control track, in accordance with **BBC WHP 198**.

It is crucial to form the control signal according to the BBC whitepaper and industry best practices to ensure that the audio description plays correctly for customers.

When creating the control signal, the following issues must be considered:

- The maximum fade value shall be 254 (0xFE) to maintain compatibility with all receiver implementations. The 255 (0xFF - full fade) fade byte depth has an adverse effect on some receiver systems in linear transmission and should not be used in commercial assets.
- The first fade shall not occur earlier than the picture start time (10:00:00:00), and the fade value shall always return to 0 (0x0) at least 6 frames before the end of the on-air duration, excluding the 5-second freeze or living hold. It is a requirement to have 6 frames of silence at the end of the on-air segment, so the fade byte depth should be returned to 0x00 at this point. (For example, in the case of a 30-second commercial, the fade value shall return to 0 six frames before 10:00:29:24, inclusive.)
- The following is an AD narration control track guidance example for a 30s commercial.

Time (ms)	Timecode	BWAV HexValue	PRG Attenuation	Notes
0	09:59:50:00	-	-	Silence/Clock
10000	10:00:00:00	00h	-0dB	Start of Message 6 frames silence
10240	10:00:00:06	Variable (not FFh)	Variable	AD narration begins
29760	10:00:29:19	00h	-0dB	AD narration complete 6 frames silence
29960	10:00:29:24	-	-	End of Message Silence

- The signal peak levels of the control track shall comply with the specifications outlined in the **BBC white paper**. We recommend taking extra care when adding audio description channels alongside the main audio.

3.4 Caption Legibility

Captions must be clear and legible and must be within the safe areas specified.

Text which is there for legal or regulatory purposes (the “small print”) must comply with BCAP’s **Regulatory Statement: Superimposed Text** on the use of superimposed text in advertising. Height is measured using flat-topped letters, where possible, e.g. “v”, “w” or “x”. If there is both upper and lower case lettering, the lower-case letter will be used to determine text height.

The **BCAP Guidelines** state that for HD television, the preferred minimum text height is 30 television lines that can be reduced to 26 lines, where there is an opaque (or solid) single-coloured background, and where there is the equivalent of at least 6 lines of background around all parts of the text.

There is also further guidance on the [Clearcast](#) website.

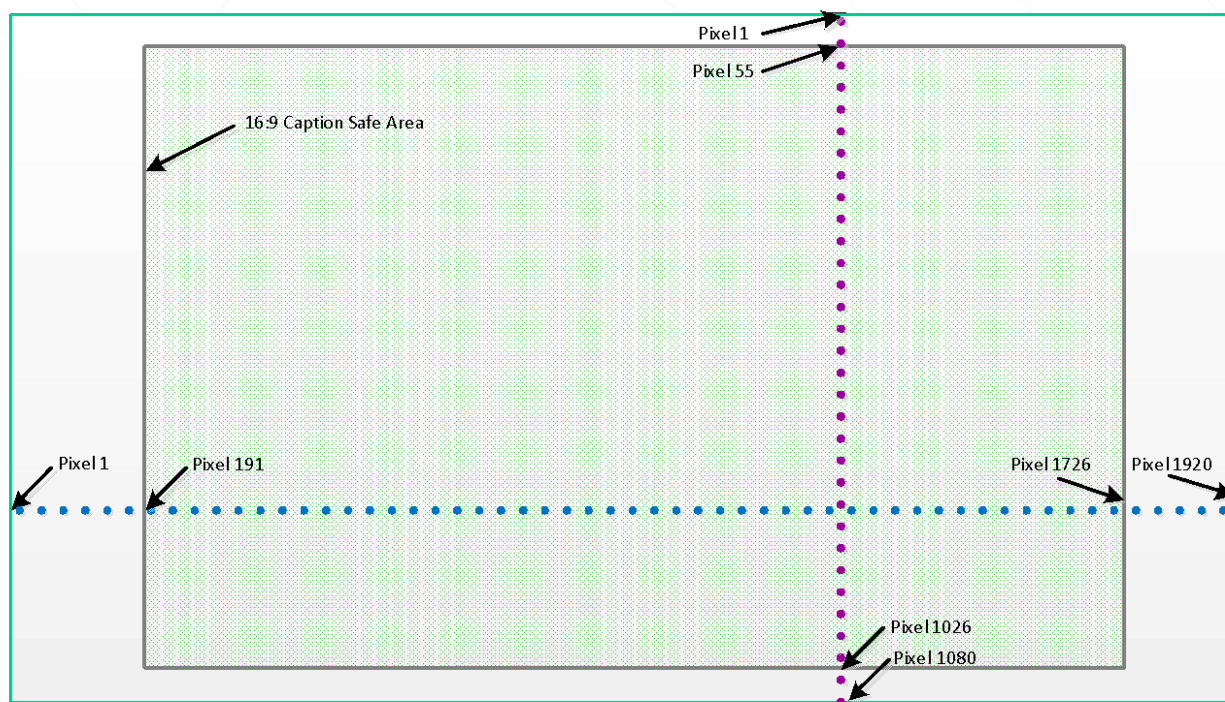
3.5 Caption Safe Area

Captions must be clear and legible and must be within the safe areas specified.

There is now only one caption safe area defined for 16:9 material for UK transmission ([EBU R 95-1](#)):

- 16:9 Used by all UK DPP broadcasters for captions and text. HD Production

Caption Safe Area	Defined as (%)	HD pixels (inclusive) first pixel numbered 1	TV line numbers (inclusive) numbering as per ITU-R BT.709
HD 16:9 Caption safe	80% of Active Width 90% of Active Height	191 – 1726 55 – 1026	48 to 532 (F1) and 611 to 1095 (F2)



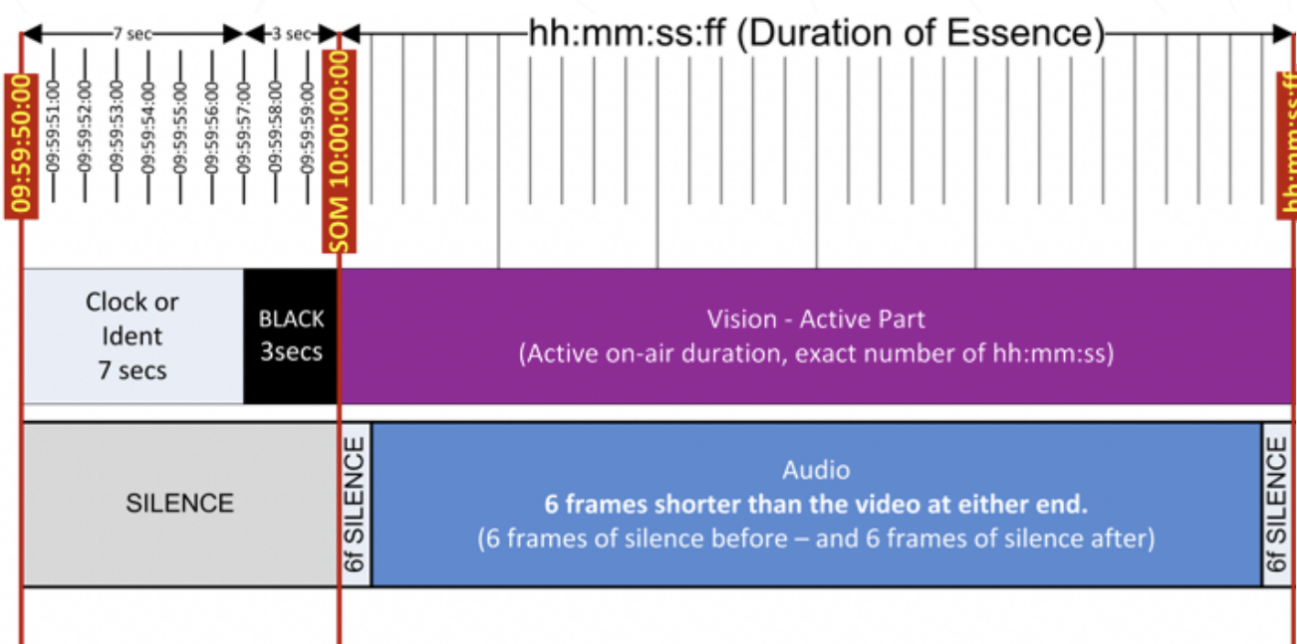
At the discretion of the broadcaster, some commercials may be excluded from this requirement.

4 TIMELINE

4.1 Timeline of a Commercial, Sponsorship, or Infomercial

All Commercial or Sponsorship material delivered on file must be laid out so that the start of message (SOM) is at timecode 10:00:00:00 as specified in the MXF Material Package timecode track. The SOM at 10:00:00:00 is defined as the first frame of vision that will go to air. Please note that it is usual for sound and vision to be automatically cut to air on transmission, so early vision or sound is not normally required. Vision may fade up from black starting at 10:00:00:00 if desired.

There should be at least 6 frames of audio silence at the start and end of the item and the duration should not exceed the stated length. A single commercial or Sponsorship asset will always be played out from the start of message (SOM) to the end point without interruption. The IN-point (SOM) and DURATION for the continuous playback section must be included with the delivery metadata.



4.2 The ident clock or slate

1. Commercial copy requires a unique Clearcast identifier supplied by the advertising agency. The content must be approved by a recognised clearance house. Every unique copy should have its own unique identifier. In order for an advertising agency to ensure the uniqueness of their identifier they must register with Clearcast to obtain their Agency Prefix which can be used to generate these identifiers.
2. Sponsorship copy requires a unique identifier; you should contact the individual broadcasters to confirm their approach to issuing this unique identifier. This content must be approved by the receiving broadcaster.
3. Infomercial copy requires its own unique identifier. The content must be approved by a recognised clearance house. In order for an advertising agency to ensure the uniqueness of their identifier they must register with Clearcast to obtain their Agency Prefix which can be used to generate these identifiers.



For all copy:

1. A clock or slate is to precede each item for a duration of 7 seconds. The clock or slate should identify as a minimum:
 - Product name
 - Identifier/Agency company number (clock number)
 - Commercial item duration
2. Black and silence should be present for 3 seconds between the clock and the first frame of the picture

4.3 Identification

1. Commercial Copy

Commercial copy is identified by unique clock numbers, obtained as outlined above in 4.1.1. "Clock numbers" are denoted in metadata as "Material ID." Without this number, the material will not be transmitted.

FILENAMES should follow the unique Clock Number assigned to it, in UPPERCASE, with the extension ".mx" in lowercase. Allowable characters are 'A-Z', '0-9', & '_'

The underscore is used in place of a forward slash. Forward slashes are not acceptable.

CTS/HXFA21/1800 becomes CTS_HXFA21_1800.mx (Please note the use of underscores, not hyphens).

CTS prefixes will need to be requested from Clearcast.

2. Sponsorship Copy

Should be in line with broadcaster requirements. Please contact the broadcaster.

3. Infomercial Copy

Infomercial copy is identified by unique clock numbers, obtained as outlined above in 4.1.1. "Clock numbers" are denoted in metadata as "Material ID." Without this number, the material will not be transmitted.

FILENAMES should follow the unique Clock Number assigned to it, in UPPERCASE, with the extension ".mx" in lowercase. Allowable characters are 'A-Z', '0-9', & '_'

The underscore is used in place of a forward slash. Forward slashes are not acceptable.

CTS/HXFA21/1800 becomes CTS_HXFA21_1800.mx (Please note the use of underscores, not hyphens).

CTS prefixes will need to be requested from Clearcast.

5 REFERENCES

The following documents contain provisions which have formed the basis for the guidance provided in this document.

1. **BT.709-6: 06/2015**
ITU Radiocommunications Sector – Parameters for the HDTV standards for production and international programme exchange
2. **The BCAP Code: v1.2.26**
The UK Code of Broadcast Advertising
3. **Ofcom Guidance Notes: Section 2, Annex 1: 2017**
Ofcom Guidance Note on Flashing Images and Regular Patterns in Television
4. **EBU R 128: 2023**
EBU Recommendation – Loudness Normalisation and Permitted Maximum Level of Audio Signals
5. **Tech 3343: 2023**
EBU Tech – Guidelines for Production of Programmes in Accordance with EBU R128
6. **Tech 3342: 2023**
EBU Tech – Loudness Range: A Measure to Supplement EBU R128 Loudness Normalisation
7. **Tech 3341: 2023**
EBU Tech – Loudness Metering: ‘EBU Mode’ Metering to Supplement EBU R128 Loudness Normalisation
8. **Tech 3343 v2: 2011**
EBU Tech 3343 Supplementary - Practical guidelines for Production and Implementation in accordance with EBU R 128
9. **UK Equalities Act 2010**
Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom which came into force on 1 Oct 2010 and superseded the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
10. **DCMS Guidance 2010**
DCMS guidance on Television Access Services for People with Sensory Impairments
11. **UK Communications Act 2003**
Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom which came into force on 25 July 2003 and superseded the Telecommunications Act 1984
12. **Ad Accessibility**
An industry group offering support to brands to make advertising more accessible
13. **Ofcom’s Accessibility Best Practice Guidelines**
Best practice guidelines for broadcasters and VOD platforms on producing access services
14. **BBC WHP 198**
Provides the specification of the audio description studio signal
15. **BCAP Regulatory Statement: Superimposed Text - Annex A: 2019**
BCAP guidance on the use of superimposed text in advertising.
16. **EBU R 95: 2017**
EBU Recommendation – Safe Areas for 16:9 Television Production



Version Control:

Version	Date	Notes
V2.0	17-05-2025	First publication of guidance for production and post-production for Commercial, Sponsorship and Infomercial Delivery as DPP Guidance DPP012. This publication supersedes previous the previous publication – <i>Commercial and Sponsorship Delivery – version 1.3.1 (2020)</i>.

Document Accuracy:

Every attempt has been made to ensure that the information contained in this document is accurate. Errors in this document should be reported to the DPP on info@thedpp.com

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