

How to Caption Videos

You will need:

- A YouTube Account or a Facebook Account
- HandBrake

Table of Contents:

- [Captioning videos and generating SRT files on YouTube](#)
- [Captioning videos and generating SRT files on Facebook](#)
- [Captioning videos on other platforms](#)

Introduction:

YouTube and Facebook provide built-in encoders that allow you to caption and post your videos all at once. Twitter and Instagram, as well as many other platforms, do not. For these, you will need an SRT file and/or a free, open-source program called Handbrake (not needed in certain special Twitter cases). **Always check with your IT department before downloading any software.**

If you do not want your video posted on YouTube or Facebook, it is possible to upload them privately, download the SRT file, and then remove them.

This document provides instructions for manual captioning on both YouTube and Facebook, but you won't need both. Once you've done your captioning on one, you'll have an SRT file to use on the other so you won't have to duplicate your work.

This accessibility expert recommends starting with YouTube and uploading the resulting SRT file to Facebook if you need Facebook captions as well. This is because I find Facebook's editor to be extraordinarily tedious, but you do you.

The YouTube tutorial section has some Choose Your Own Adventure-style jumping around between steps since YouTube provides *many* different routes to achieve the same destination. Sorry about that. Still better than Facebook's editor. I promise it's not as complicated as it looks.

Note that the methods described in this guide are not the only way to caption videos; there are many programs and services that can accomplish this. The ones in this guide just happen to be free, and don't require much technical expertise.

Have fun!

Captioning Videos & Generating SRT Files on YouTube:

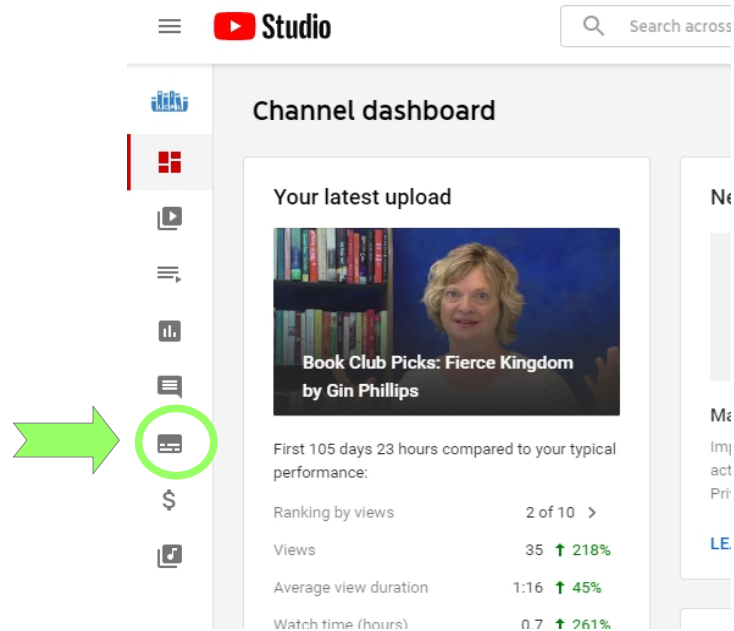
1: Upload your video to YouTube. If you don't want your video on YouTube, you can set it to private when you upload it and take it down when you've obtained the SRT file.

2: You will have the option to add subtitles at the same time as your other video details on upload, before publishing. If you're not ready to add subtitles yet, finish uploading your video without selecting subtitles and go to [step 3](#).

If you are ready to add subtitles now, click Add Subtitles (pictured below), then skip to [step 6](#)

The screenshot displays the YouTube video upload interface. At the top, a progress bar shows four stages: 'Details' (completed with a checkmark), 'Video elements' (current step, highlighted in blue), 'Checks' (completed with a checkmark), and 'Visibility' (pending). Below the progress bar, the 'Video elements' section is titled 'Video elements' and includes the instruction: 'Use cards and an end screen to show viewers related videos, websites, and calls to action. [Learn more](#)'. Three options are listed: 'Add subtitles' (with a 'New' tag and an 'ADD' button), 'Add an end screen' (with an 'IMPORT FROM VIDEO' button), and 'Add cards'. A large green arrow points to the 'ADD' button for 'Add subtitles'. At the bottom, a status bar shows 'Checks complete. No issues found.' and includes 'BACK' and 'NEXT' buttons.

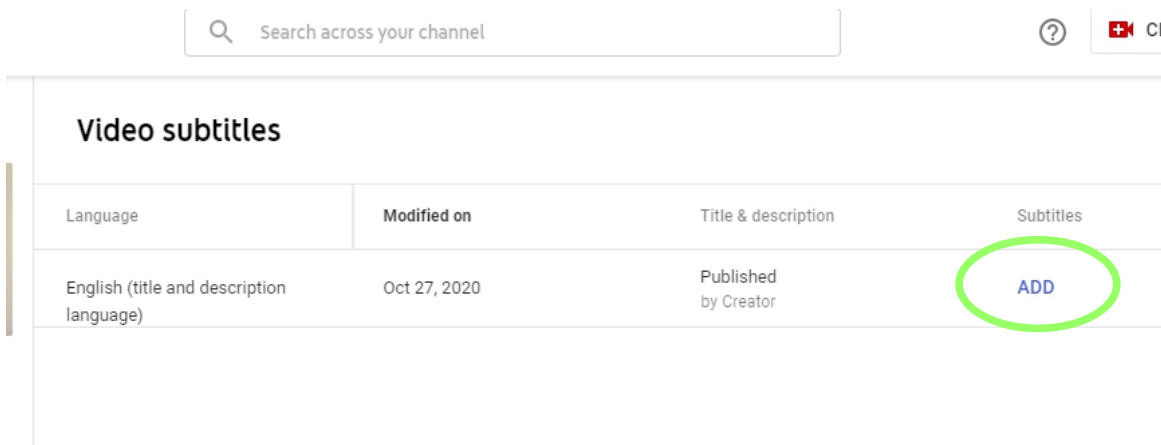
3: If you chose not to add subtitles during upload, or are adding subtitles to a previously uploaded video, head to YouTube Studio and choose the Subtitles tab on the left.



4: Click the video you need to caption

5: Click “Add” in the Subtitles column.

(Note: if you got stopped on step 7 and are returning here to edit previously drafted subtitles, look for the option that says “Edit” instead of “Add”, then return to [step 7](#).)



6: Choose “Auto-sync” to type as you watch the video, or to paste in a transcript if you have one.

 English

Select how you want to add captions

 Upload file 

 Auto-sync 

 Type manually 

 Auto-translate 

(Note: if you already have an SRT file, choose Upload File instead, and select With Timings. Then upload your SRT file.)

7: When you're done, click "Edit Timings" (not necessary if you uploaded an SRT file in step 6) and the following screen will appear.

(Note: YouTube may tell you that syncing captions is taking longer than expected, in which case you can choose "Save Draft", finish uploading your video, and return to the subtitles later by following [steps 3 - 5.](#))

The screenshot displays the YouTube subtitle editor interface. At the top, there are buttons for "English", "SAVE DRAFT", and "PUBLISH". The main area is divided into two panels. The left panel, titled "+ CAPTION" and "EDIT AS TEXT", contains a list of caption segments. Each segment consists of a text box and a time selection box. The segments are:

- Text: "This is a test of Facebook's automatically generated captions feature." Time: 01:20
- Text: "I'm uploading this video just to see if I can edit the captions that facebook automatically" Time: 05:13
- Text: "puts on it I'm gonna have to keep talking for a while to give Facebook something to work" Time: 10:02
- Text: "with. I know Facebook wants it to be a three minute video but that's just not going to happen." Time: 14:04
- Text: "20 seconds is gonna have to do. Okay! Let's see what happens." Time: 18:13
- Text: "20 seconds is gonna have to do. Okay! Let's see what happens." Time: 22:08

The right panel shows a video player with a subtitle "20 seconds is gonna have to do. Okay! Let's see what happens." and a "Pause while typing" checkbox. Below the video player, there are controls for "Enter subtitles faster with keyboard shortcuts" and a "Pause while typing" checkbox.

The bottom panel shows a timeline with a blue bar representing the subtitle duration. The timeline has markers at 20:00, 20:15, 21:00, 21:15, 22:00, and 22:13. The blue bar starts at 20:00 and ends at 22:08. There are also "UNDO" and "REDO" buttons and a search bar.

You may have to adjust sections to appear earlier or later, or change where YouTube has placed line breaks. Do this by dragging sections in the area at the bottom of the window, or editing the text boxes on the left.

8: Once the captions are adjusted to your liking, click the blue Publish or Done button at the top of the window. (Button varies depending on upload method used.)






9: If you were in the process of uploading your video, you'll have a chance to finish that now. If not, you'll be taken back to the Add Subtitles screen. Your video is now captioned on YouTube!

Don't Forget Your SRT File:

If you need to caption this video on other platforms as well, you'll need the SRT file YouTube generates.

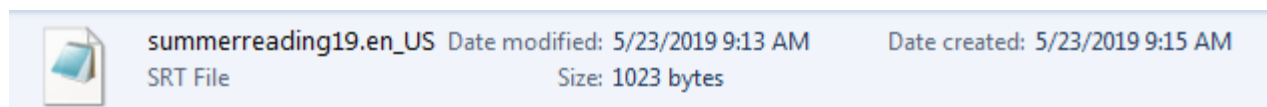
On the Video Subtitles page (go to [steps 3 - 5](#) if you need help getting there), hover over Edit and click the three dots to open a menu. Click Download and choose .srt.

Video subtitles

Language	Modified on	Title & description	Subtitles
English (Automatic)	Oct 26, 2020		 Unpublish  Download →  Delete
English (title and description language)	Oct 26, 2020	Published by Creator	 EDIT 

ADD LANGUAGE

Save the file that downloads wherever you like; name it whatever you want, but be sure to end the name in .en_US (which will tell encoders that this is a transcript in American English.)



(Do not manually type .srt at the end of your file name; Windows already knows!)

If you want to double check the file, you can open it in any text editor. I recommend Notepad. It should look like this:

```
SRP2020.en_US - Notepad
File Edit Format View Help
1
00:00:08,910 --> 00:00:09,910
Hey everybody.
2
00:00:09,910 --> 00:00:11,660
It's been kind of a wild year,
hasn't it?
3
00:00:12,200 --> 00:00:18,060
Usually, you'd already be in
the library filling out your logs and
picking out books, but the
4
00:00:18,060 --> 00:00:20,480
pandemic has kind of pushed that back.
```

Captioning Videos & Generating SRT Files on Facebook:

1: Upload your video to Facebook and click the Captions tab on the right.

1. Create Post

2. Publishing Options

Auto-Generate Captions ⓘ Off

Captions will be created automatically for your current and future videos and given an accuracy rating. You can review and edit captions once they're generated.

Upload Upload

Use SubRip (.srt) files to create captions for any language.

Write Captions Write

Write or paste your own captions directly onto your video.

Added Captions

The captions for your video that are available to review and edit.

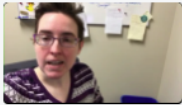
Video Details

Add details to your video and create your video post.

CC Captions AUTO OFF

Adding captions may improve your video's watch time, distribution and accessibility.

Thumbnail



Polls

Ask questions during your video to find out what your viewers think.

Tracking

Add labels to help you manage and search for your video.

360 Director Tools

Add more detail to your 360 video with guide points.

▶ Video Uploaded Next

If you already have an SRT file, click Upload and select your file. Voila, you're done!

If you do not already have an SRT file, you can turn on Auto-Generate Captions or choose Write Captions:

Auto-Generate Captions:

Facebook makes its best guess about what you're saying and sets timings. NEVER publish these without reviewing first.

When reviewing, you can adjust the timings and fix the text, but it can get tedious because you have to type time stamps manually.

Write Captions:

As of this writing, Write Captions is basically just Auto-Generate Captions in disguise.

Clicking Write will take you to a language selection tool where English is not an option, so you'll have to back out of that pop-up and return to your Upload Video window where, lo and behold, Facebook has auto-generated the English captions for you to review and edit.

There's no opportunity to paste a transcript if you have one, so you have to deal with Facebook's tedious timings editor. Best of luck to you. (It's not too late to head over to YouTube and get yourself a nice SRT file.)

(Note: Facebook Live now has live auto-generated captions (turn them on at facebook.com/live/producer under Settings > Viewing). You can edit them (or upload your own) after the video is over, too.)

Don't Forget Your SRT File:

If you've suffered through Facebook's Tedious Editor, you deserve an SRT file for your troubles.

Click the dots next to Edit under the Auto-Generated English captions and choose Download

The screenshot shows the Facebook video caption settings interface. At the top, there is a toggle for 'Auto-Generate Captions' which is currently turned off. Below this, there are three main sections: 'Upload', 'Write Captions', and 'Added Captions'. The 'Added Captions' section shows a single caption entry: 'Auto-Generated: English'. This entry has an 'Edit' button and a three-dot menu button. The 'Download' option in the menu is highlighted with a green circle.

Auto-Generate Captions ⓘ Off

Captions will be created automatically for your current and future videos and given an accuracy rating. You can review and edit captions once they're generated.

Upload Upload

Use SubRip (.srt) files to create captions for any language.

Write Captions Write

Write or paste your own captions directly onto your video.

Added Captions

The captions for your video that are available to review and edit.

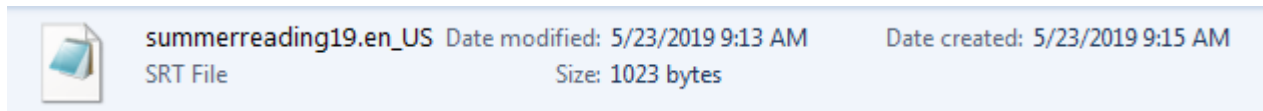
✓ **Auto-Generated: English**

Edit ...

Download

Delete

Save the file that downloads wherever you like; name it whatever you want, but be sure to end the name in .en_US (which will tell encoders that this is a transcript in American English.)



(Do not manually type .srt at the end of your file name; Windows already knows!)

If you want to double check the file, you can open it in any text editor. I recommend Notepad. It should look like this:

A screenshot of a Notepad window titled 'SRP2020.en_US - Notepad'. The window has a menu bar with 'File', 'Edit', 'Format', 'View', and 'Help'. The text inside the window is as follows:

```
1
00:00:08,910 --> 00:00:09,910
Hey everybody.

2
00:00:09,910 --> 00:00:11,660
It's been kind of a wild year,
hasn't it?

3
00:00:12,200 --> 00:00:18,060
Usually, you'd already be in
the library filling out your logs and
picking out books, but the

4
00:00:18,060 --> 00:00:20,480
pandemic has kind of pushed that back.
```

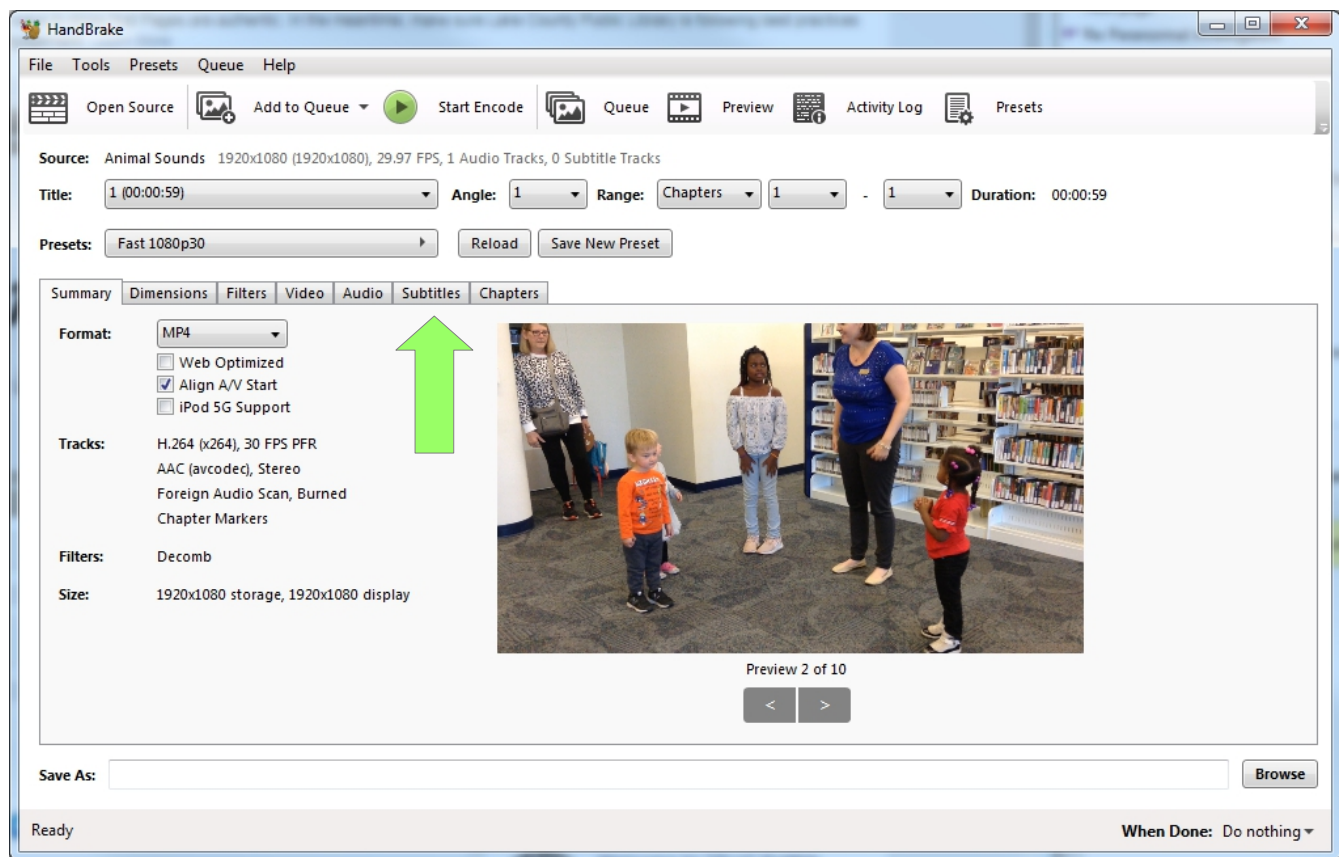
Captioning Videos on Other Platforms:

Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube are currently the only major social media sites with native SRT support. (Twitter *does* allow SRT uploads via Media Studio, but not all Twitter accounts have Media Studio access. If you do, just click the title of your video and upload your SRT file in the subtitles tab. If you do not and need Twitter captions... read on!)

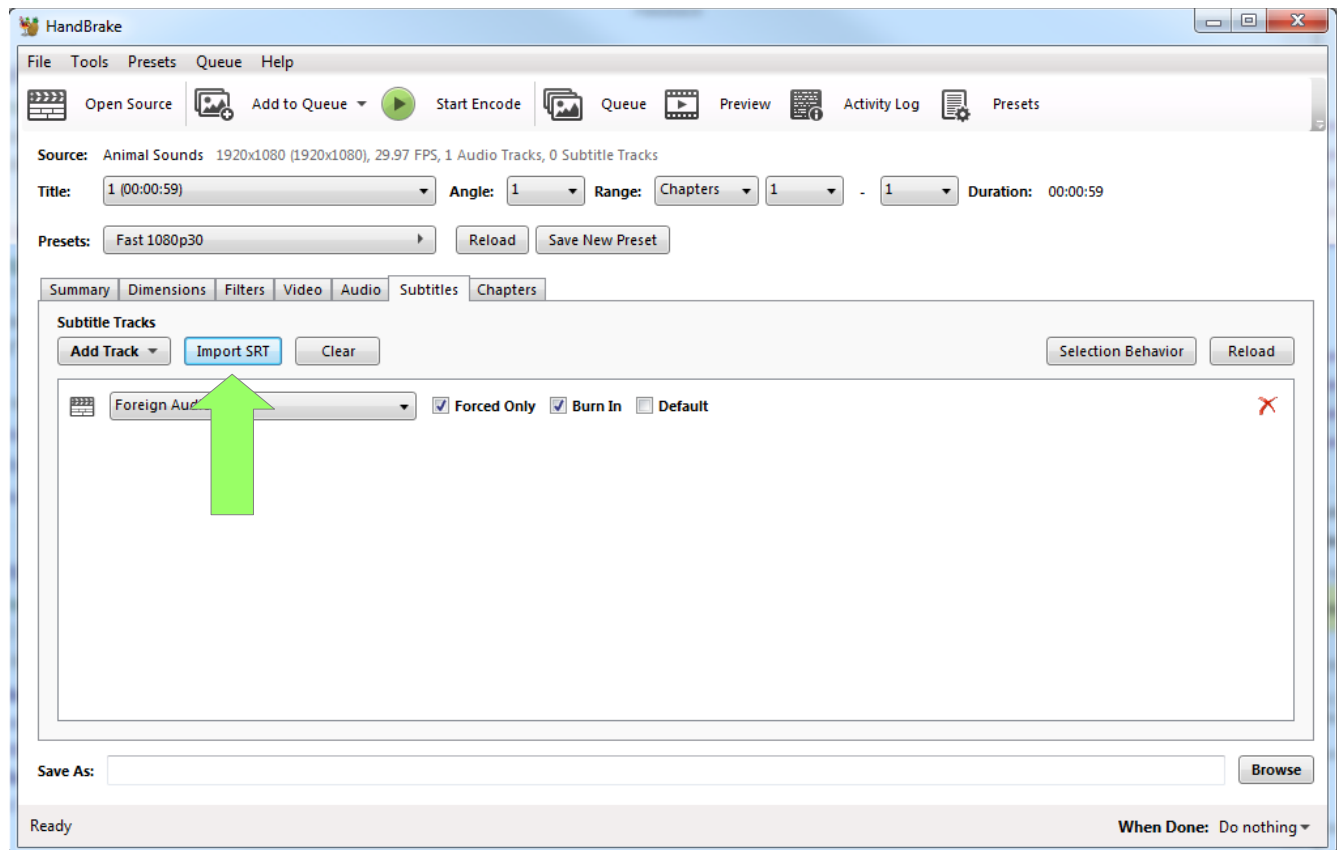
For other sites, you will have to manually add the captions to the video yourself before uploading. Luckily, this is easy, as long as you have an SRT file (which you do, because you didn't skip the preceding tutorials, right?)

1: Open HandBrake and either drag and drop your video into the window, or choose “File” under Source Selection.

2: HandBrake will process your video and then present you with the editing screen and many, many options. Choose the subtitles tab.



3: Click the Import SRT button (under Subtitle Tracks) and add your SRT file.



Note: Foreign Audio Scan is something HandBrake does to check for other languages on your video; if it detects any, it'll automatically add a subtitle track if it exists. You can remove it using the red X to the right, or leave it.

4: HandBrake should automatically set the Language to English and the char code to UTF-8, with no offset, but double check those settings anyway just in case. You'll also have two check boxes: Burn In and Default.

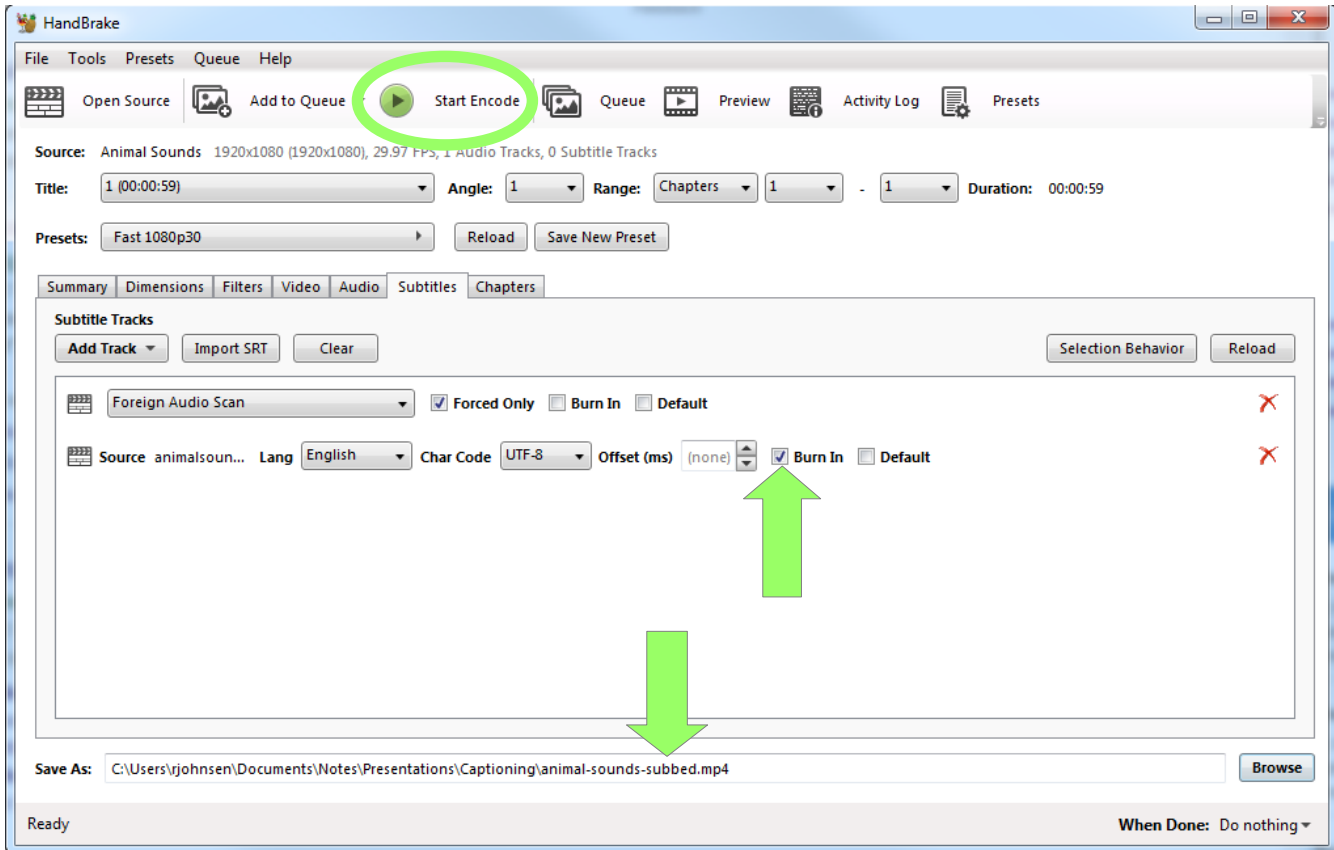
Burn In makes the subtitles permanent on your video. Users will not be able to turn them off. This is what we need to use if we want subtitles to show on platforms like Twitter or Instagram. (*Note that this only works for videos that you're uploading later to Instagram – if you use the Instagram app to record a video and post immediately, you will have no subtitle option. I recommend including a transcript in the comments in that case.*)

Default makes the subtitles “on by default” but able to be turned off. This is for built in media players on your computer, not for social media. It does not work in all video players so your mileage may vary. If you choose this option for offline use, be sure to test it in the media player of your choice. Some media players may also allow you to load the SRT file directly into the player, without the need for HandBrake.

TL;DR: Choose **Burn In**

5: Pick a place to save it using the Browse button at the bottom of the window. Save this file with a different name from the original (for example, add **-subbed** to the end of the filename) since it will have permanent subtitles and you may not want to overwrite your clean copy.

6: Double check all of your settings. If you're ready to go, click Start Encode.



When the video is processed, give it a quick look for any errors just in case.

Everything looks good? Congratulations – your video now has subtitles and can be uploaded to any platform!

BONUS: If you want to move your burned-in captions to the top of the screen (for example, to stop it from blocking on-screen text) add `{an8}` to your SRT file in front of the text you'd like to move:

```
1
00:00:00,520 --> 00:00:02,440
{an8}Can we all moo?
```

Some encoders can't read that code, but it will work for burned in subtitles in HandBrake! If you're using this SRT file on another platform (for example, Facebook), though, save a separate file without the code or it will display as part of the caption on your video.