

# CCRA'S TenTips

Guide to CART Work

California Court Reporters Association



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# TEN TIPS FOR CART CAPTIONERS

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As technology advances, we enter the advent of expanding career opportunities within our profession. CART Captioning is one of those growing fields, especially as the Americans with Disabilities Act continues to improve on protecting the rights and meeting the needs of our citizens with disabilities. Communication Access Realtime Translation, also known as CART, gives a live realtime feed to individuals with hearing loss, cognitive or motor challenges, and those with other communication barriers. The live feed is often called a "caption," and it can be offered in many settings, such as classrooms, churches, meetings, doctor visits and conferences. It can be provided on a computer screen to an individual person or a large group on an overhead projector.

There are firms that offer CART services to individuals with hearing loss in various settings. In most California State Universities and UC's, the Realtime Captioner or CART Captioner is a staff position which includes benefits and a salary. The student is assigned a CART Captioner who is expected to provide a realtime feed for each class in which the student is registered. A class schedule, along with textbook glossary and syllabus for the class, is given to the CART Captioner in order to prepare for the terminology in the class. CART captioning is an enriching and rewarding profession in which your skills help individuals pursue their own goals.

Are you interested in learning how to be a CART Captioner? With the help of some of our own CCRA members who also happen to be experienced CART Captioners, we have compiled a list of Ten Tips you need to know about CART if you are considering a transition in your profession to become a CART Captioner:

1. In California there is no certification required to be a CART Captioner. However, keeping in mind the importance of providing a top-quality product to your client, it is recommended that you have RPR and CRR certifications. Your writing is always in realtime, and your student's grades depend on the quality of your work.
2. Preparation for anticipated terminology is essential. Obtain as much information as you can from professors, textbooks, online encyclopedias about the subject matter of the student's classes. Begin creating a job dictionary and useful briefs so that in each ensuing class you are able to offer cleaner realtime to your student.
3. Be punctual. Arrive at least 15 minutes early so that you can arrange to have seating next to your student and also to make sure your equipment and realtime feed are functioning properly. Realtime can be administered nowadays in a myriad of ways. StenoCast is a great wireless option if your student wants to sit separately or closer to the professor.

4. Write verbatim to the best of your ability. Strive to be conflict-free, use punctuation, have a foolproof number system, whether it is the number bar or writing numbers out, and cut down on your untranslates. Change the color of your untranslates in your software to match the color of the background so that they do not appear and distract your student.
5. Develop a system to identify multiple speakers, preferably up to 15. The classroom setting is interactive, with questions from students and responses from the professor. It is your goal to accurately reflect these class discussions with some kind of speaker identification. If the speaker is unidentified, create an outline, which will show on your screen as "SPEAKER."
6. Your goal is also to accurately reflect what is happening in the classroom, such as cell phones ringing, an annoying lawn mower outside, a joke made by a student. You may use parentheses to reflect the occurrence, such as (cell phone ringing).
7. You are the eyes and ears of the student. Your job is to facilitate communication. Keep your editing during the class to a minimum. If your student has a question in class and would like you to ask it for him/her, have your student type the question on your computer before he/she raises a hand. When the student is called on, you can voice the question or comments.
8. The classroom is becoming highly technological, with films, overhead projectors and PowerPoint presentations often used as teaching tools. Make sure that your student is seated in the line of sight to the professor and any media tools such as overhead projectors, blackboards or televisions while still having access to your realtime feed. If a film shown in class is uncaptioned, follow the guidelines of your employer or agency. If there are no guidelines, caption to the best of your ability.
9. When the class is concluded, edit your transcript, clean it up, make any necessary dictionary entries, and e-mail to your student within 24 to 48 hours. These are your student's notes to the class. The cleaner they are and the quicker your student receives them, the more time he/she has to complete assignments and study for tests.
10. Lastly have fun! CART captioning is an exciting way to enrich your own knowledge and skills while providing an invaluable tool to a student who is on the way to achieving his/her goals.