Open source · runs locally

# English subtitles for a video in any language, free

Turn speech in almost any language into English subtitles with Whisper's translate mode, then burn them into a vertical clip with FFmpeg. Offline and free.

VideoToShorts · https://videotoshortsconverter.com/workflows/english-subtitles-any-language-free · checked November 19, 2026

COST
Free

TIME
5 to 15 minutes per clip

LEVEL
Beginner to intermediate (command line)

HARDWARE
Any recent computer; a GPU speeds up transcription.

## What you need

Whisper: Speech to English text (translate task)

FFmpeg: Burn subtitles into the video

Best for: Creators repurposing non-English interviews, Reaching English-speaking viewers, Privacy-sensitive footage.

## Steps

### 1 Install

Install FFmpeg, then Whisper.

```
pip install -U openai-whisper
```

### 2 Translate the speech to English subtitles

The translate task outputs English text whatever the spoken language. Whisper detects the source language; set --language if detection is wrong. Short caption lines suit vertical video.

```
whisper clip.mp4 --task translate --model medium --word_timestamps True --
max_line_width 28 --max_line_count 2 --output_format srt
```

### 3 Review the translation

Read clip.srt next to the video. Machine translation can miss idioms, names and numbers; fix them in the .srt file before burning in.

### 4 Burn the subtitles in

Bottom-center, outlined, lifted above the app buttons.

```
ffmpeg -i clip.mp4 -vf
"subtitles=clip.srt:force_style='FontName=Arial,FontSize=15,Bold=1,Outline=3,Alignment=2,MarginV=11
-c:a copy subtitled.mp4
```

### 5 Optional: keep a separate subtitle track instead

Uploading the .srt file alongside the video (YouTube supports subtitle uploads) keeps captions searchable and lets viewers turn them off.

## Questions

### Which languages work?

Whisper is multilingual and its translate task outputs English. Accuracy varies by language and audio quality; larger models (medium, large) do better.

### Can it translate into languages other than English?

Whisper's built-in translate task only targets English. For other target languages, transcribe in the original language and translate the text with another tool.

## Sources

- Whisper CLI options (--task translate)
- FFmpeg subtitles filter

Commands checked against each tool's docs on November 19, 2026.