

# Guidelines for recording Talking books and Talking books with text

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## 1 Introduction

These guidelines apply to recordings made on behalf of the Swedish Agency for Accessible Media (MTM).

Please contact the client if you are unsure about how the guidelines apply to a specific book.

Talking books are produced according to §17 of the Copyright Law for persons with reading impairments, who cannot read printed books or inaccessible electronic text. This includes persons with:

- reading and writing impairments
- visual impairment
- other physical disabilities, such as physical impairment and hearing impairment
- intellectual disabilities
- neuropsychiatric impairments such as autism, adhd
- temporary reading impairment

MTM also produces academic literature for college and university students with reading impairment.

These guidelines apply to recording of talking books in **DAISY-format**. MTM currently produces two versions of talking books:

- **Talking books** are talking books containing only audio recordings and headings.
- **Talking books with text** contain text, audio and often illustrations.

## 2 General about recordings of talking books

### Recording talking books

A talking book replaces a printed book. It should follow the printed book as closely as possible. The contents of the book may not be changed or added to. Only obvious errors may be corrected. In case of uncertainty, please contact the client.

Both students and professionals as well as casual readers use talking books. The same titles are often borrowed by persons with different types of reading impairments.

Foreign language books should normally be read by native speakers of the relevant language.

The narrator must have a good understanding of the text. The narrator must also be present in the reading, otherwise the reader will lose the plot.

A good recording enables the reader to focus on the contents of the text rather than on how the narrator conveys the text. The narrator must have a clear voice and articulate clearly. Strong dialects or dialectical features or a strong accent steal attention and make it harder to understand the text.

The reading should be done with correct phrasing. Emphasis and pausing should reproduce the text in a natural way. The reading pace should be adapted to the style and contents of the book. Pauses are also important between paragraphs, for example in poetry. The pause should be sufficiently long for the reader to understand that a new text, such as a new poem, new short story or new chapter, will follow. This is particularly important in texts without headings, where misunderstandings could otherwise easily occur.

Many readers find that excessive dramatization is disturbing and hinders their own interpretation of the text. At the same time, it is important to convey engagement and nuances in the text. The narrator's own sympathies or antipathies, if any, in relation to the contents, must not affect the recording.

The narrator must ensure that the sound quality of the recording is good. On every recording occasion, the narrator must ensure that the settings for the recording are correct according to the producer's instructions. The recording must not contain irrelevant sounds such as rustling of pages, coughing, background noise, etc.

When recording children's literature, the narrator should strive to read with more passion than is customary for adults and a more accessible language should be used for narrator comments. However, the narrator must avoid reading in an ingratiating way or talking down to the child.

### **Knowledge requirements**

The narrator should have a good level of general education and be able to pronounce words in the most common foreign languages (English, Spanish, German, French). Pronunciation of names and concepts in other languages must be correct. Good linguistic ability and confidence in the use of the Swedish language are, of course, important. When recording books in other languages than Swedish, the narrator must have native proficiency or equivalent in the language. The narrator must be able to convey nuances and structures in a text with the use of phrasing, emphasis and pace. When the book is written in the first person, the narrator must be of the same sex as the narrator in the text, and the narrator's age must not differ greatly from that of the narrator in the book.

### **Test recording**

Narrators must be approved by the client by way of a test recording. Criteria assessed include voice, reading, text contact and pronunciation. Narrators are approved for each subject matter category and language.

At the test recording, the narrator must confirm to the supplier that they consent to the audio files and assessment of the test recording being saved in a database. The database is accessed by the working group at MTM in charge of talking book quality and staff at the recording companies. Narrators are entitled to request all the data about the narrator that is stored by MTM. Audio files and assessments are deleted from the database at the narrator's request or if the narrator has not recorded a talking book in the last ten years.

Talking book recording is divided into the following categories:

- Fiction and nonfiction with a narrative
- Nonfiction
- Children and youth
- Poetry
- Talking books for reading practice in two speeds

For books produced as academic literature for students at colleges and universities, the narrator must be competent in the subject matter, be able to pronounce technical terms correctly, interpret and convey tables and comment on figures according to guidelines. Academic literature for universities and colleges is divided into the following categories:

- General academic literature
- Humanities
- Computer science
- Medicine
- Physics
- Chemistry
- Mathematics
- Economics
- Biology
- Law etc.

## 2.3 Part-delivery

Recordings of academic literature are often delivered in parts. Sometimes the student wants some parts of the book to be recorded before others. Illustrations, tables and notes are not included in part-deliveries. These items are recorded when the main text is ready. Part-deliveries are not proofread.

Part-deliveries must always include an announcement where the first phrase should read:

*This is part-delivery [n] comprising pages [nn-nn], [title, author]*

# 3 Special instructions

## 3.1 Introduction elements

### 3.1.1 Title (Announcement)

The talking book starts with an announcement. The announcement includes the title, the author and the producer of the book.

Between the title and the author, the narrator should add *av* for Swedish books and *by* for English books, etc. After the title and author, the following sentence must always be used:

*This talking book is produced by Myndigheten för tillgängliga medier (MTM), i.e. Swedish Agency for Accessible Media in [Year of delivery to MTM]*

*Read by [Narrator] at [Producer]*

### 3.1.2 Information on §17 of the Copyright Law

After the announcement, there follows information on §17 of the Copyright Law. The following text is recorded by the narrator of the book:

*This talking book has been produced for users of adapted media in accordance with §17 of Swedish Copyright Law. Illegal distribution or transmission will be prosecuted.*

For children's books, the following text is used:

*This book has been produced for users of adapted media in accordance with §17 of Swedish Copyright Law. Illegal distribution or transmission will be prosecuted.*

### 3.1.3 Information about the talking book

Information about the talking book describes the searchable headings in the talking book, whether anything has been left out (such as descriptions of pictures) or added (such as new headings for descriptions of pictures).

Detailed information on navigation in e.g. end matter must be provided locally. This applies to e.g. picture suites, notes at the end of chapters and indexes. In this case, the Introductory Information on the talking book will not include this information. The editor will determine when and where such local information should be provided, and the narrator will formulate this in accordance with the editor's instructions. The information is provided immediately after the heading is read. For example:

*Notes. In the Notes, there is a new chapter at level 2 and individual notes in the chapters of level 3.*

Local navigation information can also be included in individual sections in the text when these otherwise differ from the book. For example:

*In this chapter, there are sidebars, examples and exercises at level 3.*

### 3.1.4 Publisher information

In this part, the narrator should start at the top of the title page or earlier if there is important information before the title page. All information (including title and author) on the title page and the reverse thereof must be read.

Instructions for the Publisher information part:

- All text must be read (hard-to-read logotypes and graphics do not need to be read)
- The Copyright sign (©) is read as *copyright*
- When reading the ISBN number, the digits 10 and 13 should not be included in the number:

Example:

ISBN-10 91-32-33395-1 is read *ISBN-Ten [brief pause] 91-32-33395-1*

ISBN-13 978-91-32-33395-8 is read *ISBN-Thirteen [brief pause] 978-91-32-33395-8*

### 3.1.5 Back cover text

Texts on back covers, flaps and book spines are read together in the feature Back cover text. This feature is introduced as: *Back cover text*.

## 3.2 Children's books

### 3.2.1 Announcement, §17 Copyright Law and Information on the talking book

Announcement, Information on §17 of the Copyright Law, Information on the talking book and Back cover text for children's books is read in the same way as above, see sections 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.1.3 and 3.1.5.

### 3.2.3 Publisher information

In children's books, the feature "Publisher information" comes last in the talking book. An end announcement follows: *Här är talboken slut* or *This is the end of the talking book*.

## 3.3 Reading of headings

Numbered headings must be read in a consistent manner; *Chapter one, Chapter two, etc.* or *first chapter, second chapter, etc.* If there are no chapter headings in the printed book, a heading is created in the talking book with the three first words of the chapter. These words should not be recorded, since they are repeated in the narrative text, but it is important to record a couple of seconds' silence in connection with the heading.

## 3.4 Page breaks and page number readings

### 3.4.1 Reading of page numbers

Page numbers are always marked in talking books, but page numbers should not always be read by the narrator. Page numbers are not read in fiction, children's books or in nonfiction other than academic literature.

Marked page numbers are located in the same place as in the original, which means that a marked page can appear inside a hyphenated sentence. The narrator must synchronise the marked page with the ongoing recording without the reading being affected so that it is audible in the recording. Thus, the narrator must not interrupt the reading to navigate to and from a marked page number, or pause in any way. It is not a problem if single words of the recording are heard when navigating to the marked page.

Page numbers are read in academic literature. Please note that the reading of page numbers should be discrete and disturb the reading of the text as little as possible. Page numbers are also stated for pages without pagination. If a page is empty or only contains deleted materials, this should be stated. If a page includes only a picture which is not included in the talking book, the narrator should say: *Picture page*. For blank pages, the narrator should say: *Blank page*.

When reading page numbers with Roman pagination, the narrator should say: *Roman number, page one*. For other special pages, the page is read as marked in the printed text. For example, the narrator will say: *Page B 1*.

### 3.4.2 Page numbers in books with different languages

In books with summaries in another language than the language of the main part of the book, the page numbers are read in the main language of the book. Thus: In a Swedish book with an English summary, all page numbers in the book are read in Swedish.

## 3.5 Spelling out

Words should be spelled out when necessary for the sake of clarity and understanding, e.g. when reading internet addresses and names whose pronunciation differs from their spelling, e.g. Leicester. Please note that spelling out can be perceived as disturbing for the user and should only be done when requested by the editor. Words are spelled out letter by letter, syllable by syllable, i.e. broken down as follows:

s-y-l l-a-b l-e.

Genitives ('s), if any, should not be included when a word is spelled out.

## 3.6 Abbreviations

Abbreviations should only be read if it makes the text more intelligible. If an abbreviation is generally accepted or frequently used, it should only be read out the first time it appears.

Uppercase letters and lowercase letters should be identified in the abbreviations.

### 3.6.1 Abbreviations in notes and bibliographies

In the notes, it should generally be possible to search for individual notes and get information at each note. Repeated references to the same work are often written as “*ibid(em)*” (above citation). In such cases, the title and author are repeated for each new note, while the abbreviation as such is not read at all. Otherwise, abbreviations in notes, references or bibliographies should not be read.

## 3.7 Foreign languages and archaic Swedish

Words and names in foreign languages must be pronounced correctly. Names of countries, cities and famous persons must be pronounced according to Swedish practice, where available (for example, Barcelona, London, van Gogh). If it is impossible to pronounce a foreign word correctly, the word should be spelled out.

Archaic verb forms must be read as they are written, e.g., *vi gingo*. Old forms of spelling, on the other hand, should not be indicated, for example, *blifva* should be read as *bliva*.

## 3.8 Quotation marks, parentheses

Quotation marks and parentheses, for example next to dialogues and years, should not be indicated in the recording.

When quotation marks are placed in the text to mark or emphasise an expression or word, it is enough to indicate this with the voice (brief pause or change in pitch). Quotation marks should be read out when they surround a quotation, in other words a literal quotation of what someone wrote or said, and only where it is not otherwise obvious that this is a quotation. Quotation marks are read out as *quotation /.../ end of quotation*.

Parentheses are usually indicated with the voice. Parentheses should only be read out on cases where it is necessary to avoid misunderstandings (such as when the focus of the narrative is moved from the main character to the author) or when several sentences are parenthesised. In these cases, the parentheses are indicated by saying *parentheses/.../ end of parentheses*.

## 3.9 Omitted text

Omitted text can be marked in a number of ways in the printed book: three dots for short breaks or three dashes for longer breaks. These can also be surrounded by square parentheses or slashes.

If it is important for understanding the text, these markings should be read out. In these cases, say *omitted text*.

For longer, fragmentary texts, and where omitted segments of text are marked, an introductory comment on the appearance of the text is often sufficient.

### **3.10 Bold, small print, double spaced format and italics**

Bold, small print, double spaced format and italics is not read. Where, for example, bold print is used to emphasise a word or expression, this should be marked with a clear emphasis. If a word or paragraph is marked for another reason, this should be stated when justified.

### **3.11 Notes in the narrative text**

When notes are read in the narrative text, it is important that the reader understands this is a note, and where the note begins and ends. Say: *note/end of note*.

### **3.12 Index, bibliography**

In indexes, several reference words are often gathered under the same main reference word, which is then usually written only once. Unless the index is very extensive, the narrator should always repeat the main reference word to enable the reader to quickly determine, in a search, his/her location in the index. In bibliographies, omitted names of authors should be read.

### **3.13 Illustrations in the talking book**

A significant part of the literature transferred to talking books contains various types of illustrations, such as maps, diagrams, photographs, drawings or art images. When a book contains illustrations, a selection of the images should be described. This selection is made according to the Image Description Guidelines

A comment regarding an image should always begin with reading the caption.

If the illustration is placed last in the chapter, the narrator should refer to the page number of the illustration in the book. This applies regardless of whether the page number is read or not:

*On page [n] there is an illustration with the following caption...*

### **3.14 Tables**

When reading a table, it is important to describe the table as a whole before the details. In tables, the table head with columns and row headers are presented first. It is up to the narrator to determine whether the table should be read row by row or column by column. To remind the reader of the context, column and row headers may need to be repeated. However, very simple tables in list format can simply be read.

Some books contain tables as examples of how to report information. In this case, the individual values of the table are uninteresting, and an overall comment regarding the design of the table is sufficient.

### **3.15 Symbols, formulas, programme code etc.**

The narrator should inform the reader of how symbols, formulas, programme code etc. are treated. The information is provided the first time these occur in the text.

In programme code, a new row is indicated. Please note that when recording programme code, it is important to indicate all signs, including full stops and spaces.

Some books contain images that illustrate the interface of a programme. These images should only be commented briefly.

### **3.16 End announcement**

There is no heading for the end announcement, but the narrator should end the recording with: *Här är talboken slut* or *This is the end of the talking book*.

## **4 Talking books with text**

The rules for talking books with some additions and amendments also apply to talking books with text. These are set out in sections 4.1 - 4.5 below.

### **4.1 Recording of talking books with text**

The materials to be recorded is sent by the client as a DTBook-file and must be recorded without any additions or amendments. The client will indicate if the narrator should read text in addition to the marked text. The narrator must contact MTM if the narrator notices any section that is not marked but that is important for understanding the text. Other additions are set out in section 4.5 below. Please contact MTM in case of uncertainty.

### **4.2 Synchronisation**

Text and speech are recorded and synchronised simultaneous by moving a marker at each synchronisation point during the recording. When recording a talking book with text, it is important that the recording is natural and unaffected by navigation between the text sections on the screen. Synchronisation occurs at sentence level, row level and paragraph level. For some reading practice books with slow reading pace, synchronisation may take place at word level.

#### **4.2.1 Chapters without a heading**

If there are no chapter headings in the printed book, a heading is created in the talking book with the three first words of the chapter. These words should not be recorded, since they are repeated in the narrative text, but it is important to record a couple of seconds' silence in connection with the heading.

## 4.3 Announcement and Information about the talking book

Announcement and Information about the talking book is included in the DTBook-file.

The producer must write the producer's and the narrator's names in the empty fields inside the square brackets in the Announcement and Information about the talking book.

## 4.4 Image descriptions

The image descriptions texts must be written by the supplier and be included in the talking book as text and sound. Since this can be done in a variety of ways, the supplier must specify what the narrator should do.

## 4.5 The narrator's additions when reading a talking book with text

There is a number of features in talking books with text for which the narrator must record information in addition to the text.

**Between the title and the name of the first author:**

av

(English) by

**Before the name of the last author (if more than one):**

och

(English) and

**Obvious spelling errors in the file**

Should be read with correct spelling (in case of uncertainty, please contact MTM)

**Note reference** (Represented as a superscript character either asterisk(s) or a number in a red frame with its own synchronisation point):

*not (nr)*

(English) *note (No)*

**Note** (inside a dashed box):

*Not (nr) ... Slut på noten*

(English) *Note (nr) ... End of note*

Please do not forget to read the note number. In case of long notes, please state so before reading the note.

**Captions** (captions are italicised and next to the image):

*Bildtext... Slut bildtext*

(English) *Caption ... End of caption*

**Image description** (represented with a grey frame with grey text next to the image):

*Bildbeskrivning ... Slut bildbeskrivning*

(English) *Image description ... End of image description*

**Sidebars, parallel text, examples and similar** (represented by a box shaded light blue):

Please specify the type of content of the sidebar, for example, for sidebar, read *Faktaruta... Slut faktaruta*, for parallel text read *Parallelltext... Slut parallelltext*.

For English books, read *Sidebar ... End of sidebar* for all of the above.

**Block quotes** (Represented as an indented paragraph with italicised text):

*Citat... Slut citat*

(English) *Quote... End of quote*

**Table:**

*Tabell ... Slut tabell*

(English) *Table ... End of table*

NB! If the table is identified above or below the table (such as Table 15), read:

*Table 15 ... End of table*

**Roman numbering:**

For page numbers, read:

*Romersk siffra, sidan X*

(English) *Page, Roman Numeral, X*

For bullet points, read:

*Romersk siffra, X*

(English) *Roman numeral, X*

**Page numbers:**

*Sidan X*

**Lists (numbered lists, bullet points, indexes, bibliographies, etc.)**

Indexes are read as specified in the file set, without any additions: *List .... end of list*

## **4.6 Nonfiction for readers with vision**

Nonfiction for readers with vision are richly illustrated nonfiction books where images contain essential information which is hard to render in an image description and where it is assumed that the reader follows, while listening, in the printed book. The narrator does not provide any image descriptions, but refers to the images in the book.

The narrator should not comment on the images, but provide guidance on the page spread and refer to them, since it is assumed that the reader will look in the book while he/she listens to the talking book. Captions are always read. If there is text in an image or if the narrator, for other reasons, refers to an image, the narrator must describe the images on the page, so that the reader can easily find them on the page spread and know which image is described.

Page numbers are read in both books for adults and children's books.

## **4.7 Talking books for reading practice**

Talking books for reading practice area read at two speeds.

The first version is read at normal speed.

The second version is read slowly and clearly, word by word. Long and difficult words are read more slowly than short words, provided that the context in the text is not lost.

Announcements, information on the talking book, back cover text, preface and end announcement are read at normal speed in both versions.

It is important that the first phrase in the respective versions includes information on the title, author and reading speed.

Narrators of talking books for reading practice must be certified for this type of recording.