

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities Required To Be A Court Interpreter

Court interpreting is a profession that demands high levels of knowledge and skills. Many people do not realize that merely speaking two languages is hardly sufficient. If you want to perform at the level of a professional court interpreter, you must:

- Possess a highly educated, native-like mastery of both English and a second language.
- Possess a broad knowledge of the court system in general and the procedural components of all major case types as well as ancillary venues where interpreting services are required.
- Possess a thorough knowledge of the specialized terminology used by judges and lawyers
- Possess wide general knowledge characteristic of what a minimum of two years of general education at a college or university would provide.
- Perform the three modes of court interpreting, using them when appropriate:
 1. Sight interpreting (also called sight translating)--oral translation of documents, e.g., presentence reports, letters to judges, birth certificates, etc.;
 2. Consecutive interpreting--interpreting questions from judges and lawyers from English into another language and the witness' or party's answers from that language into English; and
 3. Simultaneous interpreting--interpreting everything while it is being said during a proceeding from English into the language of a LEP person (e.g. the defendant sitting at counsel table).
- Perform each of those types of interpreting in a manner that:
 1. Faithfully and accurately transmits the source message just as it would have been expressed in the target language;
 2. Preserves the tone and level of language of the source message; and
 3. Never changes, omits or adds anything to source messages.
- Deliver interpreting services in a manner faithful to (1) the Rules of Professional Conduct for Judiciary Interpreters and (2) all other policies regarding court interpretation promulgated by the Judiciary.
- Ability to speak English in a manner that is readily understood by judges, attorneys, and jurors and to moderate one's voice appropriately, speaking as quietly as possible when interpreting simultaneously and with a solid speaking voice when interpreting consecutively
- Ability to focus and concentrate on communications, screening out distractions such as extraneous noises, making accommodations that may be necessitated due to poor acoustics, and positioning oneself where necessary to receive communications to be interpreted
- Ability to monitor one's own interpretation as well as the interpretation of a partner and make corrections of one's own interpreting errors when appropriate
- Ability to use appropriate protocol to handle the many and varied challenges that will present themselves, including exercising situational control appropriately when needed to protect the integrity of the interpreter's work

- Ability to use effective note-taking techniques to enhance accuracy of interpretation, especially when working in the consecutive mode
- Ability to work effectively in teams when team interpreting is required
- Ability to use specialized equipment appropriately, particularly simultaneous interpreting equipment and equipment required for delivering telephone interpretation effectively.