

Qualifications & Self-Assessment Questions

What qualifications should you have before attempting to become a certified court interpreter in state or federal courts?

Professional court interpreters are individuals who:

- possess educated, native-like mastery of *both* English and a second language;
- display wide general knowledge characteristic of what a minimum of two years of general education at a college or university would provide; and
- perform the three major types of court interpreting: sight interpreting consecutive interpreting, and simultaneous interpreting.

Thus, proficiency in applied interpreting skills involves the two-fold elements of

- 1) a high level of mastery of two languages, and
- 2) specific performance skills in the modes of interpreting.

Court interpreters must perform each type of interpreting skillfully enough to include everything that is said, preserve the tone and level of language of the speaker, and neither change nor add anything to what is said. Interpreters must deliver services in a manner faithful to all canons of a Code of Professional Responsibility and court policies regarding court interpreting promulgated by the judiciary.

Mastery of a language at the levels required for court interpreting requires reading and speaking the languages regularly in wide variety of language contexts, and, usually, years of formal education. Acquiring the specific performance skills presupposes some element of innate ability and practice, practice, practice!

Following are: some questions to ask yourself to help you decide if you are ready to take a court interpreting certification exam.

A Few Self-Assessment Questions Related to Court Interpreting

1. Do you have experience interpreting simultaneously in court or conference settings?
___ Yes ___ No
2. Have you ever recorded yourself while simultaneously interpreting, and compared your performance to a transcription of what was originally said?
___ Yes ___ No
3. If your answer to 2 was "yes", how successful were you?
 - a) ___ I could not keep up.
 - b) ___ I could keep up most of the time.
 - c) ___ I omitted very little of the original information.
 - d) ___ I rendered the complete meaning of what was said with very few exceptions.
4. When watching the nightly news on television, I can simultaneously render the newscaster's speech into my specialty non-English language without falling behind.
 - a) ___ always
 - b) ___ most of the time

- c) ___ often
- d) ___ rarely
- e) ___ never

5. If someone reads a passage to me that is descriptive (what something looks like or something that happened), I can remember and repeat back what I hear word-for-word:
- a) ___ I have never tried this, and have no idea
 - b) ___ Only if the passage is less than 20 words in length
 - c) ___ Usually, even if the passage is as many as 30 to 40 words long
 - d) ___ Usually, even when the passage is more than 40 words long.

KEY:

Question 1: If your answer was "no", then you are very likely **not** ready for this exam.

Question 2: If your answer was "no", you probably are not ready for this exam.

Question 3: If your answer to 3 was **c** or **d** then you are a **good** candidate for the exam. If you answered **b** to 3, ask yourself whether you might have accurately rendered as much as 80% of the source language. If you think "yes", then you might pass the exam.

Question 4: You should be able to answer **a** or **b**. You are **not** ready if you answered **d** or **e**.

Question 5: You should be able to answer **c** or **d**. If you answer **d** with confidence, you have the required short-term memory ability necessary for consecutive interpretation. Then, if your bilingual language skills are very good, as described above, then you are a good candidate to pass this part of the exam.