

GUIDELINES FOR LAWYERS ON WORKING WITH INTERPRETERS

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- Always give preference to the best qualified interpreters (preferably those with NAATI professional accreditation and formal interpreting qualifications, such as a Degree or TAFE diploma in Interpreting, who are also AUSIT members)
- Qualified, experienced interpreters may want to explain their role to you and your client so everyone understands how they work and what protocols to use.
- In some languages, there may be interpreters who are not qualified. In such cases, you may need to explain their role to them and to your client: "This is a professional interpreter who will interpret everything faithfully and impartially. They are bound by a Code of Ethics to keep strict confidentiality. Direct all your questions to me and do not ask the interpreter for any advice"
- Always use the first and second grammatical persons. Don't ask the interpreter "Can you ask him why he's here?", simply ask your client "Why are you here?" and the interpreter will interpret in the same form.
- Brief the interpreter before the case and provide them with as much information as possible so they can adequately prepare
- Interpreters are required to interpret everything, including side conversations, vulgar or offensive remarks, etc. The consecutive mode will be used during a legal consultation/conference and during evidence in a court or tribunal. At times simultaneous interpreting will also be used. This is normally done in a whispered mode
- Remember that interpreting faithfully does not mean interpreting 'literally'. Word-for-word translations normally produce nonsensical renditions
- Do not assume that the client will understand legal jargon when interpreted into their language. Interpreters must interpret accurately, and cannot simplify the text or explain legal concepts. If there are no direct equivalents, the interpreter may ask for an explanation which can then be interpreted
- Do not object to interpreters' requests for repetition or clarification. It is a sign of a good interpreter to take such actions when needed, to ensure accuracy of interpretation
- If anyone questions the interpreter's rendition, do not take their criticism at face value. If the interpreter's competence is seriously challenged, you may want to hire the services of an expert to check such allegations
- Be aware of the interpreter's need for breaks and other adequate working conditions, such as a chair and drinking water
- Pause after each complete concept to allow the interpreter to interpret. Avoid any overlapping speech and do not interrupt the interpreter while s/he is interpreting
- If there is anything to be read out, provide the interpreter with a copy of it so s/he can follow. Only short and simple texts can be sight translated. Long, complex texts need to be properly translated by a qualified translator. Be guided by the interpreter's expertise on this.
- Never leave the interpreter alone with your client. It is your client, not the interpreter's. The interpreter is there to interpret for you and for your client, not to keep your client company or assist them with any other tasks.