

## WHAT TO EXPECT AND NOT TO EXPECT FROM A COURT INTERPRETER

EXPECT THE INTERPRETER TO...	DON'T EXPECT THE INTERPRETER TO...
<b>SPEAK</b> simultaneously to enable the non-English speaker to hear all that an English-speaker would hear, even the non-confidential conversations that are part of a legal proceeding and <i>don't go on the record</i> .	<b>STOP</b> interpreting when a judge indicates that statements are off the record. An interpreter has an ethical duty to interpret everything an English speaker would hear, unless specifically ordered not to do so by the Court.
<b>BE</b> the ear and the mouth of the non-English speaker, a vehicle of communication. Nothing more, nothing less.	<b>GIVE</b> advice or take the role of paralegal or attorney (i.e. the interpreter should read or sight-translate but not explain a form).
<b>INTERPRET</b> all elements of communication, including pauses, hedges, and self-corrections.	<b>SUMMARIZE</b> or sanitize speech. Unlike what is customary in other interpretation settings, such as in international conferences, in court, interpreters must not cover for speakers' flaws or word choices.
<b>INTERPRET</b> legal and other specialized terms and concepts correctly, even if there is no equivalent in the non-English language. For example, for the three-word concept: "baby-bonding therapy", the Spanish interpreter has to use ten words to render an interpretation : "terapia para fortalecer el apego entre el bebé y la madre".	<b>STEP</b> out of the interpreter's role to help the non-English speaker understand, or adapt the level of the language to suit the perceived or known educational background of the non-English speaker.
<b>SIGHT TRANSLATE</b> a short document. It is always preferable to have longer or complex documents translated in writing, rather than pressure the interpreter to translate on the spot.	<b>INTERPRET</b> as fast as a speaker can read. Pre-memorized speeches of judges or attorneys delivered at reading speed, and with many legal concepts can compromise the accuracy of the interpretation.
<b>FOLLOW</b> the train of thought of the speaker precisely and accurately concept for concept, not necessarily word for word.	<b>MAKE</b> assumptions about what the speaker intended to say, but didn't say or make sense out of something nonsensical.
<b>BE</b> an impartial party, <b>MAINTAIN</b> confidentiality and <b>FOLLOW</b> courtroom protocols.	<b>INTERPRET</b> speech that is too fast or inaudible. The proper use of <b>microphones</b> in the courtroom by all the speakers is necessary for the rendering of accurate and complete interpretations.
<b>HAVE</b> a general understanding of legal processes and procedures, and an ample vocabulary of legal terms at the ready.	<b>KNOW</b> specifics of the penal code, idiosyncratic uses of terms, or acronyms like FCS, FPP, DFCS, JPD, etc.

## PLEASE KEEP IN MIND WHEN USING THE SERVICES OF A COURT INTERPRETER

1	It is the responsibility of the District Attorney or defense attorney to request an interpreter for a non-English speaker who is not the defendant in a legal proceeding. Such request should be submitted to the interpreters' coordinator in writing—not the clerk, or on the record. If you want to make sure an interpreter will be assigned to a legal proceeding, submit said request at least 48 hours in advance.
2	Interpreters <b>cannot explain</b> or restate what you say. They can only put in another language exactly what you said.
3	When two people talk at the same time, the interpreter cannot interpret everything that is being said.
4	The interpreter is professionally and ethically bound to <b>interpret everything</b> that is said. Please don't ask the interpreter not to interpret something.
5	When you talk with a witness or someone else through an interpreter, avoid saying things like, "Ask him if..." or "Tell him that...". The interpreter is required to repeat those directives in the interpretation, and the person with whom you are wanting to communicate may find that confusing. Please <b>speak directly to the person</b> as if no interpreter were present.
6	It takes more words to interpret a statement into Spanish, and other languages have their own unique features. Please avoid rapid-fire delivery.
7	Simultaneous interpretation that will last <b>more than 30 minutes requires two interpreters</b> who alternate, or one interpreter who takes regular breaks. While everyone else is only having to understand what's being said, the interpreter has to both understand <i>and</i> convey in another language everything that is being said.
8	<b>Sometimes the interpreter needs clarification.</b> It is unethical for the interpreter to try to guess the meaning of something that s/he doesn't understand and try to make up an interpretation. Please consider the request for clarification as the interpreter's commitment to accuracy, and not as a reason to cast doubt upon his/her professional credentials.
9	When setting the pace of speech during interpreted proceedings, please consider that <b>the interpreter cannot work at the same speed as the court reporter.</b> The court reporter works in shorthand and does not need to transfer meaning from one language to another.
10	With the knowledge and consent of the attorneys, <b>interpreters need to be allowed to briefly interview the non-English speaker before the proceeding</b> begins in order to become familiar with his/her speech patterns and linguistic traits.
11	Attorneys should <b>advise the interpreter as far in advance of the proceedings as possible of any special concerns</b> they may have related to the particulars of a case. Interpreters are able to perform their duties better when they have access to documents or other information pertaining to the case.
12	Please instruct the <b>non-English speaker to respond ONLY after</b> having heard the <b>entire question interpreted</b> into his/her own language.
13	If the person using the services of an interpreter has questions or needs clarification, those questions and requests for clarification should be directed to the court or the attorneys through the interpreter; <b>the interpreter is not permitted to answer questions, only to interpret them.</b>
14	<b>Interpreters have an ethical obligation not to give opinions about the evolution or any other aspects of a case.</b> Please don't ask them for their comments.
15	If an interpreter makes an error during a proceeding, s/he has an ethical obligation to correct said error as expediently as possible. Interpreters have training on how to properly communicate their corrections.