

FOREIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER'S DUTIES—CIVIL AND SMALL CLAIMS (FOR NONCERTIFIED AND NONREGISTERED INTERPRETERS)

These Instructions

The responsibilities of an interpreter are very important. These instructions will help you. Please read them carefully.

Fluency

You must be able to understand, speak, and read both the foreign language you are interpreting and the English language.

Interpreter's Oath or Affirmation

You will be given an oath, swearing to interpret as completely and accurately as possible everything that is being said to the best of your ability. A willful violation of your oath can result in punishment.

Your Relationship to the Parties or Witnesses

Tell the judge of any relationship you have to any speaker involved in the case.

Interpret Exactly; Request Clarification Promptly

Do not summarize or try to explain what you believe a speaker is trying to say. Interpret only the exact words spoken by the person. If you are unsure of what was said by any person, stop interpreting and inform the judge that you need clarification before continuing.

When you speak to the court about an interpretation issue that must be brought to the judge's attention, please begin your statements with "Your Honor, the interpreter [for example, requests that the witness repeat herself . . .]."

Do not attempt to improve the level of language used by the speaker. Instead, simply repeat in English exactly what the speaker says, even if the language includes slang or curse words.

Confidentiality

The conversation between a party and his or her lawyer must remain confidential at all times.

Speak in the First Person

When interpreting, speak as if you are the person speaking. For example, if the speaker states, "I already paid that bill," you should interpret it as: "I already paid that bill." Your duty is simply to repeat everything that is said.

Remain Neutral

Do not take sides or try to help one of the parties to win the case. Your role is solely to interpret everything that is being said as completely and accurately as possible. Do not discuss the proceedings with any party or witness until the matter is over.

Ask the Person to Speak Slowly; Confer About Interpreting

Ask each person to speak slowly and pause after each sentence to allow you to interpret fully and accurately. If possible, confer with the speakers before you begin to interpret. Explain how you will be interpreting their words. Discuss any language issues.

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Interpret All Open Court Statements

Interpret all statements made in open court, including objections. However, interpret discussions between the person for whom you are interpreting and his or her attorney in a low voice, so that others in the courtroom will not be able to hear them.

Do Not Give Advice or Opinions

Do not give advice or your opinion to anyone, including the person for whom you are interpreting.

Position Yourself Appropriately and Speak at an Appropriate Volume

Stand or sit near the person for whom you are interpreting, but try not to block anyone's view of the judge, the jury, or the lawyers.

When interpreting for a party, speak loud enough for the party to hear you clearly but not at a volume that will interfere with the proceedings.

When interpreting for the judge or jury, speak loudly in the same manner of speaking as the person for whom you are interpreting.

If There Is a Problem, Tell the Judge Immediately

Please tell the judge immediately if any of these situations occur:

- You believe you have made a mistake;
- You do not understand, or you forgot, a part of what is being said;
- The person for whom you are interpreting does not understand you;
- You do not know how to say something in English or in the language you're interpreting;
- The speaker is talking too fast or not pausing between sentences;
- You become tired and need a break; or
- You are having difficulty of any kind.

No Payment

You are not entitled to pay from the court for serving as an interpreter in this proceeding.

If you are interested in becoming a certified court interpreter or a registered interpreter, please go to the California Courts Web site at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/courtinterpreters for information and an application.