



### **Ten Initial Guidelines for Translators & Interpreters**

1. Study or work for a while in a country where your source language is spoken, a year or longer, to improve your language ability and learn firsthand both the culture and how the language is actually used. This is invaluable in working as a translator.
2. Continue to take classes in translation and the language to improve your skills and knowledge.
3. Translate something every day. This improves your skill and ease. It also develops your ability to look for, find, and organize resources so they are at hand for translation. Become proficient in translation software.
4. Knowledge and skills in the source language are not enough. Translation is generally done from your non-native source language into your native target language (English). Therefore, your English must be excellent. Colloquial English is OK if you are translating colloquial source language (manga, movie scripts, etc.), but the vast majority of translation work is professional text which requires grammatically correct, proper, excellent English. Take courses in English, History, etc. The register of the translation document that you produce must match the register of the source document.
5. Knowledge and skills in the source language are not enough. Translation is generally done in a specific field such as law, pharmaceuticals, engineering, pop culture, technology, science, finance, news, diplomacy, etc. Double-major or minor in a related specific field, or develop a working knowledge of several fields in which you have an interest, and familiarize yourself with the terminology in those fields in both languages. Read technical journals, articles, documents, etc., in both languages in those fields. No professional translator can be a specialist in general affairs. Focus on a set number of fields.
6. Become a member of professional translator organizations and develop connections with colleagues. Such organizations are the American Translators Association, MICATA (Mid-America Chapter of the American Translators Association), similar organizations in countries where the source language is spoken, professional

organizations of the specific field which you translate, etc. When prospective clients are reading your credentials and making the decision whether or not to use your translation services, they want to know that you are a professional. Develop a concise resume and keep it updated.

7. Develop some translation samples in the specific field which you want to translate. Get some related documents, translate them perfectly, and put the original source-language text and corresponding English translation into a pdf. The sample should be about one page in length so it gives an indication of your skill level. Translate several documents and keep them in a file you can send to prospective clients as your portfolio.
8. Develop relationships with translation agencies. They are the major source of your work. Clients rarely work directly with a translator, and translation agencies provide value-added services for the clients by proof-reading your translations, combining them with other translations, doing desk-top publishing to put the final product in the format the client wants, etc. Meet translation agencies at meetings, seminars, symposia, etc. of the professional organizations. Arrange meetings at their offices.
9. Mentor with a professional translator. Contact professional translator organizations and ask them if they have mentor programs and how to participate.
10. Develop a business plan. Decide what services you will provide, what you will charge, how you will establish your business, how you will market it, etc. Take some business courses, develop a website, etc. Learn about financial & tax aspects of your small business. Carry errors & omissions insurance. Develop a logo. Use your business cards.



## Ten Guidelines for a Proper Translation

### Content & Style

1. Step 1: Read the document and note translation issues.
2. Step 2: Translate everything in the source text. Do not omit anything. Do not add anything.
3. Step 3: After the translation is finished, compare the translation to the source text to review and check for omissions, errors, etc. Maintain consistency and translate the same source word with the same target word throughout the document. If the author uses 2 similar source terms, the translator should provide 2 similar target terms.
4. Step 4: Re-read the translation, keeping the source text in mind, to ensure that it accurately reflects the source text.
5. If the register of the source text is a poorly written, scattered document, the translation text should reflect a poorly written, scattered document.

If the register of the source text is a well written, precise document, the translation text should reflect a well written, precise document.

6. When a source document is a well-written document, keep in mind that it has gone through revisions and editing during the document creation process. Keep the translation as close in content and style to the original source document to respect this process.
  - a. One Source Sentence = One Translation Sentence
  - b. One Source Paragraph = One Translation Paragraph
  - c. The final format of the translation document should resemble the original source document as much as possible.
  - d. Without the client's instructions, the translator does not have the discretion to re-write the document. If you feel the document should be re-written to make it "sound better" in the translation, it is not your prerogative to do that. The translator should provide the client with a clean translation of the original. If the client wants to re-write it, that is the client's prerogative.

7. Do not add “Translator Notes” or optional translations, etc. You are the professional, and you should provide a professional translation. If the source text is unclear to you, return the document for clarification or ask that a more seasoned translator handle it. If you must provide a “Translator Note,” consult with the translation agency before you submit your translation and let them decide how to handle it.
8. When translating a chain of e-mails, look at the dates and translate from the earliest e-mail through to the latest e-mail, generally from the bottom to the top. This provides context.
9. When translating pdf documents that contain text blocks that are not in the source language, consider using copy/paste or the Snipping Tool to copy/paste a picture of that into the translation document rather than retyping it. This improves accuracy.
10. Use proper target-language punctuation. Source-language punctuation and target-language punctuation do not necessarily correspond one to one.

### **Translation Grammar Guidelines**

1. Follow the Source grammar whenever possible:
  - a. Source active-voice verb = Target active-voice verb
  - b. Source passive-voice verb = Target passive-voice verb
  - c. Source subject = Target subject
  - d. Source direct object = Target direct object
  - e. 1 Source sentence = 1 Target sentence