

Guidelines for Sight Translators

These sample guidelines are designed for both sight translators and school assessment coordinators. The school or district assessment coordinator may use these guidelines to develop a similar document tailored to the school or district where the assessment will be rendered into the student's native language. In most cases, the person rendering the sight translation will not be a district employee and may not have attended a K-12 school in the United States. Therefore, he or she may not be familiar with district procedures for administering standardized tests.

Preparation before the test

- Read and sign the Non-Disclosure Agreement before testing begins.
- Obtain and read a copy of the test administration instructions. If portions of the instructions are to be read aloud, read them now and prepare to be able to render them into the student's language on the day of the test.
- Tests are often administered in more than one session. Know which test sections should be administered during each test session.
- Make sure you are aware of any school policies regarding bathroom emergencies, student sickness during the test, fire alarm, etc.
- Explain to the testing coordinator that you will need a copy of the test booklet in order to prepare to read the test in the student's language. Explain that you will make notes in the test booklet to help you in the sight translation and that you will leave the test booklet at the school with the test coordinator.
- After receiving the test booklet, read the entire text in English, and identify the unknown words and phrases.
- Look up the meaning of the unknown words in a monolingual English or bilingual dictionary and write the meaning or target language equivalent of the word on your copy of the test booklet.
- Notice the style of writing used on the test. Is it formal or informal? Your rendering of the text should use the same degree of formality in the student's native language. The degree of formality of the language, known as the register, should never be changed. Even if you think that the student will not understand the technical language and you wish to simplify it to be sure the student understands, *you may not simplify the language of the text*. If the student does not understand the question, he or she may ask questions about it, as any student might, but only the test administrator coordinator should answer the student's questions. Your rendering should also reflect the tone, style, spirit and intent of the original text.

- Does the test include titles, subtitles, tables, graphs, etc? Be sure that you know how to translate titles and subtitles. Plan how you will translate tables and graphs to the student. Make any notes necessary on your copy of the test booklet.
- Identify any technical words or jargon in the text and look up the meaning of any unknown words. If you don't know the word in the target language, look it up in a bilingual dictionary. Write the translation on your copy of the test booklet. If you don't know the meaning of the target language equivalent, look it up in an English or target language monolingual dictionary. Or, ask a teacher at the school where you are preparing to administer the test to explain what the term means. There are also a growing number of online resources and glossaries: not all are 100% reliable, but they may be very helpful.
- Notice any abbreviations in the test. If you don't know what they mean, look them up in an English monolingual dictionary or in a bilingual dictionary. If you find the abbreviation defined in the monolingual dictionary, but you don't find it in the bilingual dictionary, check for the target language abbreviation on the Web and write it in your test booklet. Also, translate the term and write the translation in your test booklet. If the student asks for the full-length version of an abbreviation (the exact words that it stands for), you may say it.
- Think how this item would be stated in the target language. Is an appropriate translation fairly linear, or does the sentence, thought, or information have to be organized and presented in a completely different order in the target language? If the latter, you may want to write a translation of the sentence or item in your copy of the test booklet.
- Sometimes a particular term does not exist in the target language. In such cases it is permitted to paint a small "word picture," or to give a paraphrase of several words to convey the meaning. A full definition may not be appropriate, since it may give away information that is tested on the exam. If anything more than a few brief words is required, please share this problem with the school assessment coordinator and ask for advice.
- After you have prepared your copy of the test booklet, practice doing a simulated sight translation, reading aloud from your copy of the test booklet. If you stumble, reread the word, phrase, or item with proper and natural pronunciation and intonation. Continue rereading aloud until you get it right.
- If your sight translation is rendered too slowly, you will need to practice it again, until your pacing and rate are natural. Note that it is often easier and faster to perform sight translation in privacy. Allow for extra time for the real sight translation, especially the first few times that you perform sight translation of testing materials for a student, as the real-life setting creates distractions that slow down the pace of your sight translation unless you are a trained professional interpreter.

- Be prepared to leave your marked-up copy of the test booklet at the school, and make it clear that you will need to have the same test booklet with you when you administer the test.

Immediately before and during the test administration

- Have the student turn off any cell phone.
- If the student has a dictionary, and he or she is permitted to use it, make sure that it is a bilingual dictionary or glossary with no definitions, not a monolingual dictionary containing definitions.
- Make sure that the student has number 2 pencils. The school will have them for the student.
- Remove or cover any prohibited materials in the room (such as visual aids) that directly relate to test content.
- Make sure there is a test and answer booklet/document for each student that will take the test with you. Make sure each student has the correct test booklet and answer document, especially if these contain the student's preprinted name and other information.
- Tell the student the ground rules of the test administration in the student's native language. Explain that you will translate orally each item and that you will wait until he or she has finished answering the question, before presenting the next item. Explain that you can repeat all or part of the item, but you can not tell the student the correct answer nor help the student get the correct answer. Explain that you can not verify if an answer is correct. Be friendly but firm on these points. Some students may be accustomed to interpreters who help them in many ways and they may have expectations about your role during the test that do not apply in the formal administration of a state assessment. The middle of a formal assessment is no place for a disagreement about the interpreter's proper role.
- Render aloud (in the student's native language) the portions of the test directions that are supposed to be read aloud to the student.
- When sight translating, speak loudly and enunciate clearly, using proper stress, pitch and intonation. Ideally, a sight translation should sound as if you are reading aloud from a text printed in the target language.
- You may repeat a word, sentence, or item that the student does not understand, but don't define any terms for the student. That constitutes assistance that gives the student extra help that is not received by other students. Extra help is unfair to other students and it gives a false impression of the student's actual level of knowledge and

performance on the test. It is unethical for an interpreter to provide such assistance and it is also strictly forbidden.

- Read the document as if it is written in the target language. Sudden starts and stops and long pauses that occur, while you figure out a difficult translation problem, are distracting to the student who wants to understand the question. Enunciate clearly.
- Read the full text. Do not summarize or condense any part of the original text, even if it is very long, repetitive or confusing and you think the student does not need to hear it.
- Make sure the student is marking the answer booklet/document and not the question booklet when answering the questions, unless the instructions require that the student write or mark the answer in the test booklet. If a student is putting answers in the wrong place, instruct the student to transfer the answers to the correct location or document.

After the administration:

- Collect all test materials from the student, including any notes or scrap paper and return them to the School Assessment Coordinator.
- If required, translate any student answers to English in the student's answer book or document.
- Fill out the Sight Translator or Test Administrator Report Form and give it to the School Assessment Coordinator. If you haven't already done so, return the signed Non-Disclosure Agreement to the School Assessment Coordinator or other designated school employee.
- Notify the School Assessment Coordinator of any testing irregularities as soon as possible and fill out any required forms. You may also need to assist the coordinator or another school employee in filling out one or more forms.
- If you think you are finished, ask for permission to leave, but do not leave until you are given permission to do so.

Code of Ethics for Interpreters

The ethical standards below are reprinted nearly verbatim from the Code of Ethics for Interpreters in Health Care, published by the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care (2004). The full code of ethics document, which includes history and commentary, is available on the web at http://www.ncihc.org/NCIHC_PDF/NCIHC_COE_962005.pdf. These standards are widely applied to interpreting in other community settings, including educational interpreting. A novice interpreter who is going to perform a sight translation may find it helpful to consider these ethical standards.

Confidentiality

The interpreter treats as confidential, within the treating team, all information learned in the performance of professional duties, while observing relevant requirements regarding disclosure.

Accuracy

The interpreter strives to render the message accurately, conveying the content and spirit of the original message, taking into consideration its cultural context.

Impartiality

The interpreter strives to maintain impartiality and refrains from counseling, advising or projecting personal biases or beliefs.

Role Boundaries

The interpreter maintains the boundaries of the professional role, refraining from personal involvement.

Cultural Awareness

The interpreter continuously strives to develop awareness of his/her own and other cultures encountered in the performance of their professional duties.

Respect

The interpreter treats all parties with respect.

Advocacy

When an individual's health, well-being, or dignity is at risk, the interpreter may be justified in acting as an advocate. Advocacy is an action taken on behalf of an individual that goes beyond facilitating communication, with the intention of supporting good outcomes [or well being]. Advocacy must be undertaken only after careful and thoughtful analysis of the situation and if other less intrusive actions have not resolved the problem.

Professional development

The interpreter strives to continually further his/her knowledge and skills.

Professionalism

The interpreter must at all times act in a professional and ethical manner.