

Washington State Court Interpreter Program



WASHINGTON
COURTS

Oral Certification Exam Self-Study Preparation Guide

~ Spanish Version ~

The most effective way for interpreters to improve their skills is to take classes over a long period of time, where they can receive personalized feedback on their interpreting and linguistic skills. Such classes, however, are not necessarily available to all interpreters due to financial and/or geographic limitations. Therefore, many interpreters preparing for the oral court certification exam use self-study techniques. This manual provides information and guidance to help provide structure to that process.

The first section provides a summary of the requisite knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA's) that court interpreters must have to effectively carry out their work requirements. This is particularly important to understand because many exam candidates frequently presume that linguistic skills alone are sufficient for court interpreting. Aspiring court interpreters should use this list to help them identify the areas on which they need to focus their training and studying.

The second section provides an overview of the oral exam developed by the Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification, and which is the exam used in Washington for court interpreter certification. This important document provides information on how the exam is structured, how a performance is evaluated and suggestions for preparing for the exam.

The third section contains information about many court interpreter self-study resources. This is by no means an exhaustive collection of resources, and the Washington Administrative Office of the Courts does not vouch for any of these products. However, this information is provided to give some ideas on self-study tools that are available for self-study purposes.

The fourth section includes suggested skills enhancing exercises to help develop the KSA's (see section one) necessary for court interpreting. While some of these documents were developed in reference to the oral court interpreter certification exam administered in California, the information is equally relevant for those taking the exam in Washington.

The remainder contain information for journaling your efforts to develop your court interpreting KSA's. You will be most successful if you can practice every day – even thirty minutes per day will be more effective than three hours once per week. Set realistic goals for yourself as you progress from month to month. Record your strengths and your weakness, and figure out ways to improve.

You will not likely achieve the skill level needed for passing the oral exam by studying just once in awhile, no matter how strong your linguistic skills and legal knowledge are. This process requires an ongoing commitment, which will not even end upon passing the oral exam. Rather, court interpreters must continually strive to sharpen their skills and learn about the ever-evolving terminology encountered in the courtroom. The learning process doesn't end at certification. It is a lifelong pursuit for the professional court interpreter.

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSA's) needed for the Function of Court Interpretation

Source: Study of California's Court Interpreter Certification and Registration Testing, Prepared by ALTA Language Services, Inc. for the Judicial Council of California, Administrative Office of the Courts

Linguistic Skills

- Native-like proficiency in all working languages;
 - Ability to think and react communicatively in all working languages;
 - Knowledge and use of a broad range of vocabulary, including legal terminology, subject-specific terminology, and slang; and
 - Knowledge and use of cultural nuances, regional variations, idiomatic expressions, and colloquialisms in all working languages.
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Speaking Skills

- Ability to speak with proper pronunciation, diction, and intonation in all working languages;
 - Ability to speak with a neutralized accent in all working languages; and
 - Ability to project and/or speak softly.
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Listening Comprehension Skills

- Ability to listen to and comprehend different rates of speech in all working languages;
 - Ability to listen to and comprehend various regional accents and/or dialectical differences in all working languages; and
 - Ability to ignore auditory distractions and focus on source speaker.
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Reading Comprehension Skills

- Ability to read and comprehend overall meaning and specific details of written text in all working languages;
- Ability to read and recognize various written contexts, including formal and informal text, subject-specific vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and colloquialisms; and
- Ability to read quickly and with little preparation.

Interpreting Skills

- Ability to concentrate and focus;
- Ability to process linguistic information quickly;
- Ability to make quick linguistic decisions regarding word choice or terminology selection;
- Ability to apply short-term memory skills in retaining small units of information;
- Ability to think analytically;
- Ability to utilize predictive thinking skills to anticipate incoming messages;
- Ability to convey meaning;
- Ability to provide transference from one language to another;
- Ability to preserve accuracy;
- Ability to select appropriate equivalents for vocabulary or phrases;
- Ability to accommodate for lack of equivalents in vocabulary or phrases;
- Ability to conserve intent, tone, style, and utterances of all messages;
- Ability to reflect register, and
- Ability to self-monitor and self-correct.

Behavioral Skills

- Ability to practice and follow ethical standards;
- Ability to conduct business in a professional matter;
- Knowledge and awareness of cultural aspects that affect language;
- Ability to work in various settings, situations, or conditions;
- Ability to project self-confidence and self-awareness when interpreting;
and
- Knowledge and continued learning of social, technological and legal changes that affect language.

Practice Examination Assessment

Date Taken: _____

No. Correct Units

Percentage Correct

Sight Translation: English to Foreign
Sight Translation: Foreign to English
Consecutive
Simultaneous

Scoring Unit Categories with most Errors (circle all that apply):

Grammar

False Cognates

General Vocabulary

Slang/Colloquialism

Technical Vocabulary

Idioms and Expressions

Names/Numbers/Dates

Modifiers, Emphasis

Register/Style

Position and Special Function

How does this performance compare with previous attempts? (if applicable)

My strengths are: _____

My weaknesses are: _____

I can improve by: _____

Goals & Resources for Month One

This Month's Goals:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Study/Training Resources:

Daily Log and Assessment

Date: _____

Time Started: _____

Time Ended: _____

Circle the skills group focused on:

Linguistic

Speaking

Listening Comprehension

Reading Comprehension

Interpreting

Behavioral

Specific Skills Addressed: _____

Activities Completed: _____

Resources used: _____

Examples of mistakes or difficulties: _____

Ideas for improvement: _____

If Working on Interpreting Skills:

Did you record yourself interpreting? Yes No n/a

Did you listen to the recording? Yes No n/a

Weekly Summary

Date Range: _____

Number of times I trained: _____

Total number of hours I trained: _____

Goals met: _____

Study/training methods most effective: _____

Goals not met: _____

Why they were not met: _____

Goals for next week:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Resources & activities to meet these goals: _____

Goals & Resources for Month Two

Previous Month's Goals

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

This Month's Goals

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Study/Training Resources

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Goals & Resources for Month Three

Previous Month's Goals

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

This Month's Goals

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Study/Training Resources

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Goals & Resources for Month Four

Previous Month's Goals

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

This Month's Goals

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Study/Training Resources

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Classes Attended

Course Title: _____

Date(s): _____

Location: _____

Instructor(s): _____

Instructor Contact Information: _____

Course Description: _____

Materials Provided: _____

As a result of this course, I learned that I need to improve: _____

I can improve by doing: _____
