

A step by step guide to using interpreting services

The Interpreting and Translation Team's interpreters work on an "as and when required" basis, which means notice is normally needed to make an interpreting arrangement, although we will respond to emergencies. It will be very helpful if you could give us as much notice as possible.

It is the responsibility of the service provider, to book an interpreter. It is not the customer's responsibility

1. Before booking

Identify:

- Your customers language, dialect and country of origin.
Is there a second language in which the customer can communicate? If so, what is it?
This information will be useful in enabling us to find an interpreter with the closest language match if the customers first language is rare.
- Any cultural needs of your client, such as a request for a male/female interpreter, etc.
- Check that the customer is happy for you to arrange for an interpreter to attend.

2. Booking an interpreter through the team

Phone the team and give the following details:

- Your name
- Your directorate/service area
- Your telephone number
- Required language(s)/dialect(s)
- The name of the customer, so that the interpreter can say if that person is known to them which would mean that their impartiality may be at risk
- Any cultural requirements, e.g. male/female interpreter
- Meeting time and place
- Background and practical purpose of the interview
- Whether an interpreter from outside the local area is required in the interests of confidentiality
- What the customer knows about the details of the appointment. Do you need the interpreter to phone the customer to confirm the time, date and place of the proposed appointment?

3. Before the interview:

- Time allocation: Plan to spend at least double the time you would spend in a monolingual interview.
- Brief the interpreter: Clarify respective roles and give background to the interview, deal with issues such as confidentiality, ensure that the interpreter is clear about the use of technical terms.
- Seating arrangement: Arrange the seating so that you and your client face each other, such as on either side of a table, so that the interpreter can sit between you at the end of the table. In this way, the interpreter is not perceived physically as being on one "side" or the other.

4. During the interview:

- Introduce yourself and allow the interpreter to introduce her/himself and her/his role, which is to give impartial, complete and confidential interpretation of everything that is said.
- Speak clearly and directly to the customer, rather than saying to the interpreter, "tell him that..."
This will make the interview go more smoothly and will enhance the feeling that you are talking to each other directly.
- Take charge of the whole interview process yourself.

- Ask the customer directly if you are not sure of relevant, culture-based facts, attitudes or perceptions. Do not ask the interpreter. The interpreter may intervene if s/he believes that you or the client has misunderstood a cultural reference.
- Fully explain structures and procedures which are relevant to the subject being discussed.
- Give the interpreter time to understand your message and think about how best to interpret it.
- Speak in simple and precise language.
- Reduce the use of jargon as much as possible.
- Be prepared to repeat, explain or rephrase your message for the interpreter's benefit.
- Allow the interpreter to have a short break if the interview lasts longer than an hour.
- At the end of the meeting, check whether the customer has understood everything and wants to ask any questions; then summarise what has been decided and clarify the next steps to be taken.

At all times, you should remember that the interpreter is an independent professional. S/he will have had full training in interpreting and is not there to offer opinions on the matters being discussed. Do not ask the interpreter to comment on the issues and do not say anything that you do not wish the interpreter to say in the language of the client. This puts the interpreter in an embarrassing position and prevents her/him from carrying out her/his job.

5. After the interview

- Complete section 2 of the invoice form from the interpreter, making sure that the information in section 1 is correct. Your service/directorate will be charged accordingly.
- Please note that a cancellation fee will apply to assignments cancelled with less than 24 hours' notice.
- Complete a feedback form if applicable. The Interpreting and Translation team welcomes any feedback (compliments/complaints/suggestions).
- If you need the same interpreter again for a future appointment, please ring the Interpreting and Translation Team. **DO NOT** book the interpreter directly.

Cancellations

If an interpreter has been booked for a session and the session is cancelled within 24 working hours, full costs will be recharged. If cancelled outside of 24 working hours, no cost will be recharged.