



Written Test of English Language Proficiency and Legal Terminology For Per Diem Court Interpreters in Languages Other than Spanish

General Information

Interpreter professionals interested in freelance assignments within the New York State Unified Court System (UCS) as a Per Diem Court Interpreter are required to pass the Written Test of English Language Proficiency and Legal Terminology. Depending on the language, individuals who are successful on the written test may also be required to pass an oral examination in the target language. After successful completion of the two parts, all candidates must undergo a criminal history investigation and participate in an ethics training seminar when offered to be placed on the registry list of Per Diem Court Interpreters. This list is then used to meet the language needs of the NYS Unified Court System.

This guide provides an overview of the content of the written test. Applicants are strongly encouraged to read the descriptions for each section and review the test question examples carefully to know what to expect on the test. The written test consists of 75 multiple-choice questions. Applicants will have 90 minutes to complete the written test which is designed to assess the following:

- A. Reading and Understanding Written Material - Sentence Completion
- B. Reading and Understanding Written Material - Paragraph Comprehension
- C. Grammar and Language Usage
- D. Vocabulary - Synonyms
- E. Vocabulary - Antonyms
- F. Idiomatic Expressions
- G. Legal Terminology

Qualified court interpreters possess native-like mastery of both English and the target language and have the ability to do consecutive, simultaneous and sight interpreting in a courtroom setting. To increase their proficiency of the English language, applicants may find it helpful to take an English course at a college or university and study vocabulary-building books found in the reference sections of libraries and bookstores.

To improve knowledge of court-related legal terminology, there are many excellent glossaries and other resources available to interpreters in publications and on organizational websites such as: <http://www.ncsc.org> and <http://www.najit.org>. Applicants can also reference a copy of the UCS Court Interpreter Manual and Code of Ethics which contains a legal glossary and extensive practical information useful to both current and prospective court interpreters that is available on the NYS Unified Court System's website at: <http://www.nycourts.gov/courtinterpreter/index.shtml>

The questions that follow are for **illustrative purposes only**. These examples represent different types and formats of questions that applicants may encounter on the written multiple-choice test. Test questions that appear on the actual test vary in difficulty and may be easier or more difficult than the questions illustrated below. The answers to the sample questions can be found at the end of this document.

Content of Written Test

A. Reading and Understanding Written Material - Sentence Completion

These questions are designed to assess applicants' ability to comprehend written material in English. Applicants are given sentences in which one or more words are missing. Applicants must select the word or phrase that best fits into the blank space so that the sentence makes the most sense. To answer the following questions, choose the word that **best** completes the given sentence.

1. Mr. Smith is _____ in his job by his lack of education.
 - A. hardened
 - B. hampered
 - C. hallowed
 - D. heightened
2. Studies have shown that longevity in the Far East is _____ to the inhabitants' wholesome diet.
 - A. attributed
 - B. discovered
 - C. disconnected
 - D. contributed
3. Both spouses were _____ about the division of their assets, as each felt they, more so than their partner, had contributed to the accumulation of their wealth.
 - A. unwavering
 - B. compliant
 - C. contrite
 - D. affable
4. The military was secretly intent on removing the dictator, so the operation planned had to be _____.
 - A. complex
 - B. vulnerable
 - C. transparent
 - D. covert
5. The judge gave the jury instructions in a _____ manner because their comprehension was critical to the case.
 - A. deliberate
 - B. feeble
 - C. callous
 - D. monotonous
6. A 'not guilty' verdict was almost _____ given the conflicting testimony of the undercover police officers.
 - A. improbable
 - B. indefinite
 - C. inevitable
 - D. far-fetched
7. The entertainer amused the crowd with his _____ mannerisms while performing his comedic routine.
 - A. serious
 - B. jocular
 - C. distressful
 - D. frivolous
8. The hiker's allergic reaction to bee stings caused him to be _____ after he was bitten by a swarm of bees.
 - A. incapacitated
 - B. bemused
 - C. enabled
 - D. coerced

9. The defense attorney did not consider his witness' reluctance to testify as a(n) _____ to his defense since the attorney had other witnesses who saw what happened.

- A. hindrance
- B. asset
- C. opposition
- D. advantage

10. Although charged with grand larceny, the bank teller was careful not to _____ others who were involved in the crime for fear of retribution.

- A. oscillate
- B. intonate
- C. inundate
- D. implicate

B. Reading and Understanding Written Material - Paragraph Comprehension

The following questions assess applicants' ability to read and understand written material. Each question contains a reading passage followed by some questions. Applicants must first read the passage and then choose the option that best answers the stated question. Applicants should only use the information provided in the passage. They are not required to have any specialized knowledge relating to the content covered in this section.

Answer question **11** based solely upon the information contained in the following passage.

People who appear in a court in the State of New York have the basic right to an interpreter. Criminal defendants must be allowed to assist in their own defense by being present at their trial and being able to understand the court proceedings. The courts have ruled that criminal defendants who cannot understand English are entitled to have the proceedings interpreted for them in a language that they do understand. Failure to provide an interpreter where one is needed may void the outcome in a criminal trial. Similarly, in a civil trial, where a witness or party does not speak English, the court has the authority to appoint an interpreter. In fact, the Judiciary Law provides for the temporary appointment of an interpreter in any court, if these services are necessary. This right also applies in instances involving physical disability such as a hearing impairment.

11. According to the above passage, a criminal trial may be voided if:

- A. an interpreter is not provided where one is needed.
- B. any of the parties do not speak English.
- C. an interpreter was requested but was unavailable.
- D. a physical disability such as a hearing impairment is involved.

Answer questions **12** through **14** based solely upon the information contained in the following passage:

Since the 1960's, there has been a veritable explosion in the use of foreign language interpreters in courtrooms. New York has been at the forefront of this issue providing access to justice for linguistic minorities from early on. The state's continuing sensitivity to the social needs and rights of those with limited proficiency in the English language has spread across the nation. Today, judicial policy in courts nationwide, has recognized that to deny the non-English speaking defendant and those with a hearing impairment the services of a court interpreter, is akin to denying someone their basic constitutional rights. Notwithstanding New York and other states' commitment to equal access before the law, there are other hurdles to overcome. Educational institutions have yet to fully embrace the value of investing resources to educate the public about language services and related professions. While the courts have long ago accepted and embraced the need for quality interpretation services, other organizations have only recently awakened to this reality. Municipal entities, non-profit organizations, social service agencies, city hospitals, and others are all vying for these specialized services. Local colleges and universities would be surprised to learn that providing their students with curricula that reinforce their linguistic skills could open innumerable doors to many fulfilling career paths.

- 12.** According to the above passage, educational institutions should provide curricula about language interpretation services because:
- A. denying the public knowledge about interpretation services would be equivalent to denying them a constitutional right.
 - B. there is a veritable explosion of foreign immigrants coming to the U.S.
 - C. students would have more opportunities to find work by using their language skills.
 - D. municipalities and non-profit organizations all use interpreters.
- 13.** According to the above passage, which of the following would benefit from having interpreters?
- A. city hospitals
 - B. law offices
 - C. hotels in high tourist areas
 - D. news organizations
- 14.** According to the above passage, which of the following statements is **not** correct?
- A. Immigrant communities in states other than New York have significantly increased.
 - B. Universities are actively engaged in developing interpreting departments.
 - C. Court systems nationwide recognize the constitutional right to an interpreter.
 - D. New York's leadership and sensitivity in this area has been embraced by other states.

Answer questions **15** and **16** based solely upon the information contained in the following passage:

A little more than two years ago, tenants paid a reasonable \$2,200.00 for a spacious 2-bedroom rent-stabilized apartment in the city. When rent increases were announced, tenants looked to see if they could get more for their money. Luckily for a few, some luxury apartment buildings were desperate to find tenants and offered generous incentives and cut-rate deals to new tenants. Management

companies were willing to pay the broker's fee and even gave new tenants a month of free rent for committing to sign a two-year lease. However, as the economy began to rebound, landlords have been able to demand higher rents and are less willing to provide these types of incentives. Real estate analysts now say that several factors are conspiring to keep rents high. They cite the low vacancy rates, the shortage of new developments on the horizon and the increased demand for the apartments that are available.

15. According to the above passage, which of the following statements is correct?
- A. Improvements in the economy were first noticed two years ago.
 - B. Real estate analysts believe vacancy rates are related to rent increases.
 - C. The developments planned in the near future will help tenants find bigger apartments.
 - D. As the economy began to improve, landlords offered fewer incentives.
16. According to the above passage, which of the following statements is **not** correct?
- A. Paying over \$2,000.00 for a two-bedroom apartment was reasonable 2 years ago.
 - B. The rebounding economy has led to a shortage of new developments.
 - C. Landlords today are exploring incentives to attract tenants.
 - D. Luxury apartment buildings offered leases with 1 month of free rent.

C. Grammar and Language Usage

The following questions are designed to assess applicants' ability to apply the rules of English grammar, usage, punctuation, and sentence structure. To answer these questions, applicants must select one of the four sentences which is **most correct** according to the rules of English grammar, usage, punctuation, and sentence structure.

- 17.
- A. While the victim lay injured on the floor of the store, the police dispatcher counseled the shopkeeper on how to perform first aid.
 - B. While the victim laid injured on the floor of the store, the police dispatcher concealed the shopkeeper on how to perform first aid.
 - C. While the victim lay injured on the floor of the store, the police dispatcher counceled the shopkeeper on how to perform first aid.
 - D. While the victim laid injured on the floor of the store, the police dispatcher cancelled the shopkeeper on how to perform first aid.

18.

- A. Cable companies has expanded into the communications arena.
- B. The police department operator was unable to hear the caller due to static.
- C. Stunning advances in medicine are keeping people alive well into their nineties.
- D. She and I have never agree on anything of significant importance.

19.

- A. I wonder how much costs that book.
- B. I wonder what of that book the price is.
- C. I wonder how much does that book cost.
- D. I wonder what that book costs.

20.

- A. There is a reason why drivers and passengers should have seatbelts securely fastened.
- B. Seatbelt fastened is known to prevent injuries.
- C. Highway patrolman see many fatal accidents without seatbelts fastened.
- D. Speed limits and seatbelts fastened are their to reduce fatal injuries.

21.

- A. If you do not have a lawyer, filing a claim which are complex can be intimidating.
- B. If you do not have a lawyer, filing a claim which is complex can be intimidating.
- C. If you do not have lawyers filing a claim which are complex, can be intimidating.
- D. If you do not have a lawyer filing a claim which is complex, can be intimidating.

22.

- A. Disappointed baseball fans had mix feelings as they look forward to football games.
- B. Ticket prices are expected to encourage perspective fans.
- C. Watching the recent draft picks play is the most exciting part of the game.
- D. Icy roads should of discouraged me from driving and getting into an accident.

23.

- A. According to a common belief, Europe and Asia are regarded as being distinct continents, but they are vast geographic divisions of the larger land mass known as Eurasia.
- B. It is according to a common belief, Europe and Asia are regarded as being distinct continents, but they are vast geographic divisions of the larger land mass known as Eurasia.
- C. That it is according to a common belief, Europe and Asia are regarded as being distinct continents, but they are vast geographic divisions of the larger land mass known as Eurasia.
- D. While according to a common belief, Europe and Asia are regarded as being distinct continents, but they are vast geographic divisions of the larger land mass known as Eurasia.

24.

- A. Public transportation in most of the nation is expanding. Although, the use of subways and buses is declining in some metropolitan areas.
- B. Public transportation in most of the nation is expanding. Consequently, the use of subways and buses is declining in some metropolitan areas.
- C. Public transportation in most of the nation is expanding. Hence, the use of subways and buses is declining in some metropolitan areas.
- D. Public transportation in most of the nation is expanding. Nevertheless, the use of subways and buses is declining in some metropolitan areas.

25.

- A. Between you and I, she always tells the truth.
- B. Between you and me, she always tells the truth.
- C. Between you and myself, she always tells the truth.
- D. Between yourself and I, she always tells the truth.

D. Vocabulary - Synonyms

These questions assess applicant's knowledge of general English vocabulary. To answer these questions, applicants must select the word that most closely expresses the **same** meaning as the target word.

26. Labyrinth

- A. flower
- B. building
- C. maze
- D. overwhelming

29. Onus

- A. burden
- B. grace
- C. dignity
- D. bias

27. Pardon

- A. appease
- B. placate
- C. restore
- D. forgive

30. Quibble

- A. shiver
- B. acquiesce
- C. submit
- D. argue

28. Veracity

- A. aggressiveness
- B. truthfulness
- C. full of life
- D. provability

31. Prey

- A. animal
- B. victor
- C. primal
- D. victim

32. Appease

- A. excite
- B. agitate
- C. placate
- D. curtail

34. Plunder

- A. loot
- B. replace
- C. confiscate
- D. succeed

33. Bellicose

- A. meditative
- B. combative
- C. compliant
- D. passive

E. Vocabulary - Antonyms

These questions assess applicants' knowledge of general English vocabulary. To answer these questions, applicants must select the word that most closely has the **opposite** meaning of the target word.

35. Impede

- A. obstruct
- B. facilitate
- C. distribute
- D. interfere

38. Deplete

- A. exhaust
- B. replenish
- C. eradicate
- D. consume

36. Felonious

- A. angelic
- B. cat-like
- C. satanic
- D. criminal

39. Affirm

- A. declare
- B. witness
- C. support
- D. negate

37. Mourn

- A. lament
- B. grieve
- C. celebrate
- D. renew

40. Deliberate

- A. motivational
- B. hurried
- C. reflective
- D. intentional

41. Jovial

- A. ecstatic
- B. furious
- C. jolly
- D. sedative

42. Extol

- A. applaud
- B. communicate
- C. glorify
- D. criticize

F. Idiomatic Expressions

These questions assess applicants' knowledge of idiomatic expressions commonly used in everyday English conversation. Applicants must choose the word or phrase from the alternatives that **best conveys** the meaning of the idiomatic expression.

43. Sharp as a tack

- A. difficult to get along with
- B. pointy
- C. dangerous
- D. very bright

46. Playing the devil's advocate

- A. consorting with the enemy
- B. twisting the truth
- C. putting forth counter-arguments
- D. enacting satanic rituals

44. Swamped

- A. overwhelmed
- B. waterlogged
- C. sticky
- D. crowded

47. Dry run

- A. jogging in clear weather
- B. sun after a rain shower
- C. parched speech
- D. rehearsal

45. Dodged a bullet

- A. hid in a tight space
- B. avoided a problem
- C. resolved an argument
- D. unscrambled a code

48. A smoking gun

- A. a gun that backfires
- B. obvious proof of guilt
- C. the weapon used in a crime
- D. an angry person

49. Cold turkey

- A. abruptly
- B. incrementally
- C. when eating fowl
- D. after meals

50. In a nutshell

- A. In a confined place
- B. In summary
- C. In Lieu of
- D. In quotations

51. The grass is always greener on the other side

- A. The grass grows on the sunny side of the street.
- B. Circumstances may change.
- C. Some other place is always better than where you are.
- D. There is more than one path to success.

52. Don't cry over spilled milk

- A. Do not regret what cannot be changed.
- B. Focusing your hopes on one person is a waste.
- C. Plan for the future.
- D. Spilled milk is spoiled milk.

53. Have your cake and eat it too

- A. Eating cake will make you sick
- B. Enjoy it while it lasts
- C. Don't regret past events
- D. Wanting it both ways

G. Legal Terminology

These questions assess applicants' knowledge of basic legal terminology that court interpreters frequently encounter in their daily work. Applicants must select the legal phrase or definition that **best completes** the given statement.

54.

The instructions that a judge gives to the jury before the jury begins deliberations is known as the:

- A. verdict
- B. closing argument
- C. judge's charge
- D. summation

55.

A monetary amount for conditional pretrial release from custody is known as:

- A. lien
- B. bail
- C. fine
- D. surcharge

56.

To oust someone from a dwelling through the legal process is to:

- A. dispossess
- B. disenfranchise
- C. disintegrate
- D. disassemble

57.

An admission of guilt in exchange for a specific sentence is:

- A. a plea bargain
- B. a hung jury
- C. a no lo contendere
- D. ipso facto

58.

A 'retainer' is an agreement between:

- A. two or more jurors
- B. a juror and a judge
- C. a client and an attorney
- D. two or more attorneys

59.

A conviction happens when:

- A. the prosecutor's evidence is overwhelming
- B. the defense has an ironclad alibi
- C. all the witnesses are credible
- D. the jury returns a guilty verdict

60.

Legal assistance which is free of charge is:

- A. non pro tunc
- B. pro se
- C. pro bono
- D. de novo

61.

Offenders who repeatedly commit the same crimes are involved in:

- A. restitution
- B. res ipsa loquitur
- C. reciprocity
- D. recidivism

62.

A judgment awarding a plaintiff relief sought in the complaint because the defendant failed to appear in court is known as a:

- A. judgment by comparison
- B. judgment of dismissal
- C. default judgment
- D. judgment of discontinuance

63.

A peremptory challenge allows an attorney to dismiss a potential juror:

- A. without cause or giving reason
- B. with cause and giving reason
- C. after a hearing is held
- D. when everyone agrees in chambers

Answer Key to Sample Questions													
1	B	11	A	21	B	31	D	41	B	51	C	61	D
2	A	12	C	22	C	32	C	42	D	52	A	62	C
3	A	13	A	23	A	33	B	43	D	53	D	63	A
4	D	14	B	24	D	34	A	44	A	54	C		
5	A	15	D	25	B	35	B	45	B	55	B		
6	C	16	C	26	C	36	A	46	C	56	A		
7	B	17	A	27	D	37	C	47	D	57	A		
8	A	18	C	28	B	38	B	48	B	58	C		
9	A	19	D	29	A	39	D	49	A	59	D		
10	D	20	A	30	D	40	B	50	B	60	C		