

Scoring of the Examination

It is necessary to pass both the written and the oral portions of the examination. Candidates that are unsuccessful on these exams will not be afforded the opportunity to retest for a minimum of one year.

Your performance on the oral assessment will be evaluated by a professional bilingual expert rater, based upon the accuracy and completeness of your interpretations. The rater does not know the names of the candidates whose responses they are scoring.

If you successfully pass the Written Test, the Oral Performance Language Assessment, and/or submit the appropriate references, as applicable, you will be contacted by the Office of Court Administration to arrange for fingerprinting before a local police/court agency authorized to perform fingerprinting; there is a fee for this criminal history investigation. All voucher-paid interpreters must successfully undergo a criminal history investigation before accepting court interpreting assignments and participate in an ethics training seminar when offered. All court interpreters are required to meet the minimum educational qualifications of a High School Diploma or the Equivalent, and have a legal right to work in the United States. Upon successful completion of this process your name will be added to the NYS Registry of Per Diem Court Interpreters and forwarded to the courts.

More questions about the Court Interpreting Program?

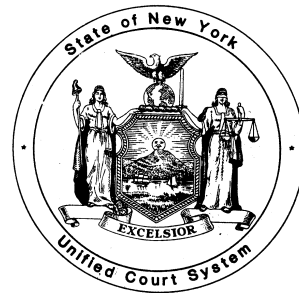
Please contact:

Office of Court Interpreting Services
8th Floor, 25 Beaver Street
New York NY 10004
(646) 386-5670

e-mail: courtinterpreter@courts.state.ny.us

Website: www.nycourts.gov/courtinterpreter

Candidate Guide to the Language Assessment Testing Program for Court Interpreting



New York State Unified Court System*

*The Language Assessment Testing Program is coordinated by the Personnel Division of the Office of Court Administration and provides local state court administrators with language screening tests in the following languages: **Albanian; Arabic; Bengali; BCS-Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian; Cantonese; French; Greek; Haitian Creole; Hebrew; Hindi; Italian; Japanese; Korean; Mandarin; Polish; Portuguese; Punjabi; Russian; Spanish; Urdu; Vietnamese; Wolof.** These tests are administered in a limited number of court administrative offices and are offered solely on the basis of the needs of individual courts for court interpreting services in the above languages. Examinations in additional languages are developed periodically, as needed.



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The Purpose of the Language Assessment Program

This program was designed to provide a mechanism for screening and qualifying service providers to offer court interpreting services on a per diem free-lance basis in the New York State Courts. The evaluation involves an assessment of proficiency in English and a second language and the ability to interpret between these two languages.

This program does not offer a professional certification and candidates who successfully pass the screening tests are not "Certified Court Interpreters". Rather, successful candidates are placed on the **NYS Registry of Per Diem Court Interpreters** that is shared by different state court administrators throughout the New York State Unified Court System.

In the Registry, interpreters, who serve as independent contractors, are listed by language and may be considered for short term court interpreting assignments on an as needed basis by individual courts. This registry is solely for the use of court operations in the New York State Court System.¹

The current pay rates for per diem paid court interpreters is \$250 for a full day (more than four hours) and \$140 for a half day (up to four hours). There is no compensation offered for travel time.

Modes of Interpreting

In order to participate in the oral examination, it is important to understand the distinctions between different types or modes of interpreting:

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Note: The New York State Unified Court System also conducts a separate examination for the employment of full-time permanent Spanish Court Interpreters. Competitive examinations are conducted every four (4) years. For further information about the Spanish Court Interpreter Competitive Examination please write to: The Examination Unit, Office of Court Administration, PO Box 1060, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008-1060.

Consecutive interpreting is used in question-and-answer situations, such as when a witness is questioned by an attorney or when there is other direct dialogue between a judge, attorney or officer of the court and a non-English speaker. The interpreter waits for the complete question or statement in English before beginning to translate into the other language. When the interpreter has finished, the non-English speaker responds. When he or she has completed the response, the interpreter translates it into English, and so on.

Simultaneous interpreting requires that the interpreter speak contemporaneously with the speaker whose statements are being interpreted. This mode is used when the non-English speaker is listening to others speak during the proceedings.

Sight translating requires the interpreter to read a document or other material written in one language and immediately provide an oral translation.

The Nature of the Written Test and Oral Performance Language Assessment

To be a qualified service provider, candidates must demonstrate sufficient language competency by passing the appropriate form of the Written Test and the Oral Performance Language Assessment as described herein.

Written Test (Spanish/English) Spanish only

This written test is a multiple-choice format examination designed to assess English and Spanish language proficiency involving grammar, vocabulary, word usage and reading comprehension. Due to the high frequency of use of this language,

this examination also has a component where the candidate is required to accurately identify a written translation in Spanish of a selection presented in English and vice versa. Candidates are allowed 90 minutes to complete this examination and must obtain a passing score on the examination.

Written Test (English Proficiency Only)- for all languages except Spanish

This written test is multiple-choice format examination designed to assess English Language Proficiency and Legal Terminology. The examination consists of 75 items, and you will have an hour and a half (90 minutes) to complete the written examination. The examination is designed to assess the following areas: Reading and Understanding Written Material - Sentence Completion and Paragraph Comprehension; Grammar and Language Usage; Vocabulary - Synonyms and Antonyms; Idiomatic Expressions and Legal Terminology.

Oral Performance Language Assessment

The Oral Performance Language Assessment is based on material which Court Interpreters typically encounter in courtroom situations. The examination is approximately one hour in duration. The exam consists of the following six (6) sections:

1. English Sight Translation
2. Foreign Language Sight Translation
3. Consecutive Question and Answer (English and the Foreign Language)
4. One-Voice Simultaneous (English)
5. One-Voice Simultaneous (Foreign Language)
6. Two-Voice Simultaneous (English)

More About the Oral Performance Language Assessment

The first two sections of this exam, the sight translations, are not on videotape. The other sections are all on the videotape with one or two people speaking in a simulated courtroom situation. You will be instructed before each section as to the mode of interpreting required,

that is whether you are to do consecutive or simultaneous interpreting.

You are required to orally translate everything spoken in English into the foreign language and everything spoken in the foreign language into English. All of your responses will be tape-recorded (audiotape only, not video). You will be asked to speak clearly into a microphone in a normal tone of voice. Once the examination has started the tape **cannot** be stopped. Please remember that you should keep going even if you miss some words. A few errors will not keep you from obtaining a passing score.

The most important consideration for court interpretation is accuracy. You should not summarize, but strive for thoroughness. Idioms should be translated appropriately to convey their meaning, not literally. Proper names should not be translated but left in their original language. Interpreters should strive to maintain the same register when interpreting from one language to another. Register refers to the level of language used, such as formal, conversational or slang. Formal, official language with more complex syntax and vocabulary in English should be preserved when put into the foreign language.

If you wish to take written notes to aid you during the oral exam, the monitor will provide blank paper. All notes must be returned to the monitor at the end of the testing session. Note taking is not permitted during the sight translations.

Qualifications for Interpreters of Languages in which the UCS does not currently have an Oral Performance Assessment

Following a successful performance on the required written test of English Language Proficiency and Legal Terminology, you must submit at least three (3) professional references, for each language in which you

wish to be qualified to provide interpreting services.

References should:

–Specifically attest to your interpreting skills and/or language proficiency in the particular language.

–Include addresses and corresponding phone numbers where these individuals may be reached during normal business hours.

References from UCS personnel are **not** accepted. Subject to the verification of submitted references (and fingerprinting, as required of all court interpreters), you may be qualified to provide interpretation services.

Note: If an oral examination is incorporated into the Language Assessment Testing Program at a later date, you will be asked to participate and pass such a test in order to remain eligible to provide court interpreting services.

You may also refer to the Reciprocity Provisions for the Per Diem Assignment Registry, at <http://www.nycourts.gov/courtinterpreter/Reciprocityprovisions.pdf> for other certifications accepted by the Unified Court System.

Court Interpreting for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Although the Unified Court System does not test for proficiency in American Sign Language, the Chief Administrative Judge has established the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc (RID) as a recognized credentialing authority.

Interpreters holding this credential may be placed on the NYS Registry of Per Diem Court Interpreters and provide court interpreting services after successfully undergoing the required criminal background investigation.

Advance Preparation

If you feel that you wish to improve your interpreting skills, there are several ways you can practice. Consider the following:

-Work on expanding your vocabulary in English and the second language.

-Practice memory-building techniques to improve your ability to retain information.

-Practice note taking to facilitate retention of numbers, dates and addresses.

-Try sight translating written documents or magazine articles.

-Practice doing consecutive and simultaneous interpreting of radio or television programs.

To improve your 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: www.ncsconline.org and www.najit.org. You 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 court interpreters working in the courts that is available on the NYS Court System website at: <http://www.nycourts.gov/courtinterpreter/CourtInterpreterManual.pdf>

If you are not familiar with courtroom proceedings you might want to visit a courthouse and observe a trial in session. Another possibility is to watch actual televised courtroom trials or programs that dramatize courtroom situations and practice interpreting the content. There are many excellent books available about court interpreting and the skills needed to do it well. Check your local public library for recommended titles.

Helpful Tips

Gather the material you will need for the test site such as your admission letter, picture identification, and instructions for getting to the test site. Plan to arrive at the test site 15 minutes early. At some locations, you will have to go through a magnetometer (metal detector) before going to the exam room.

There will be an identification form to fill out prior to the test.