



Written Examination of Language Proficiency and Legal Terminology For Per Diem Court Interpreters in 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 and Oral examinations. After successful completion of the two parts, all applicants must undergo a criminal history investigation and participate in an ethics training seminar, when offered, in order to be placed on the registry of Per Diem Court Interpreters. This list is then used to meet the language needs of the New York State Unified Court System.

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

- I. Translating Written Material (English to Spanish & Spanish to English)
- II. Grammar and Language Usage (Spanish and English)
- III. Vocabulary (Spanish and English) – Synonyms & Antonyms
- IV. Reading and Understanding Written Material
 - Format A - Paragraph Comprehension (Spanish and English)
 - Format B - Sentence Completion (Spanish and English)
- V. Legal Terminology (English)

Qualified court interpreters possess native-like mastery of both English and Spanish and have the ability to do consecutive, simultaneous interpreting and sight interpreting of court-related documents in a courtroom setting. 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.

SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

I Translating Written Material

These questions assess applicants' ability to translate written selections from one language into another.

A. English to Spanish

A statement in English is presented followed by four statements in Spanish. For each question, select the option that **most closely matches** the translation into Spanish.

1.

The speaker cleared his throat before starting his speech.

- A. El orador carraspeó antes de comenzar a su discurso.
- B. El orador se aclaró la garganta después de dar comienzo a su discurso.
- C. El orador limpió su garganta antes de dar comienzo a su discurso.
- D. El orador aclara la garganta antes de dar comienzo a su discurso.

2.

He was told to begin after he had studied the matter thoroughly.

- A. Le dijeron que comenzara cuando había estudiado el asunto por todas sus partes.
- B. Se le dijo que comenzara después que hubiera estudiado el asunto a fondo.
- C. Se le dijo que el debería comenzar cuando haya estudiado el asunto en distintas formas.
- D. Ellos le dijeron a el que comenzara después de haber estudiado el asunto completamente.

3.

She was being pressured to make her decision.

- A. Hacían presión a ella para que decidiera.
- B. Presionaban a ella para que hiciera su decisión.
- C. Presión se le ponía para que dijera su decisión.
- D. Ella fue presionaba para que tomara su decisión.

4.

The defendant stated he did not commit the crime.

- A. El defendiente declaró que él no cometió el delito.
- B. El acusado declaró que el no hizo crimen.
- C. El acusado declaró que el no cometió el delito.
- D. El defendiente declaró que el no cometió el crimen.

5.

The district attorney examined the witnesses.

- A. El abogado del distrito examinó a los testigos.
- B. El fiscal interrogó a los testigos.
- C. El fiscal le hizo un examen a los testigos.
- D. El abogado del distrito interrogó a los testigos.

B. Spanish to English

A statement in Spanish is presented followed by four statements in English. For each question, select the option that **most closely matches** the translation into English.

6.

Si no fuera por su buena apariencia, nunca lo hubieran contratado para administrar el negocio de su familia política.

- A. If it weren't for his good status, he would never have managed to get hired to run his in-laws' business.
- B. If it weren't for his good looks, he would never have been hired to run his in-laws' business.
- C. His good looks managed to help him get hired to run his in-laws' business.
- D. He would never use his good looks to manage to run his in-laws' business.

7.

El catedrático solía recalcar ciertos temas.

- A. The speaker had the habit of repeating certain themes.
- B. The chairperson usually reiterated certain themes.
- C. The professor was accustomed to stressing certain themes.
- D. the lecturer would dwell on certain themes.

8.

Al avanzar la jornada de ese día el empezó a sentirse cada vez más débil.

- A. As the day advanced he felt weaker and weaker.
- B. With each passing hour of the day he began to feel weak.
- C. As the day's work advanced he felt weaker.
- D. As the day's work progressed he began to feel weaker and weaker.

9.

“Al pan, pan y al vino, vino”.

- A. Bread and wine don't mix.
- B. Wine is stronger than bread.
- C. Call a spade a spade.
- D. Let them eat cake.

10.

Tocaron a la puerta pero no conteste por temor a que me arrestaran.

- A. They knocked at the door but did not answer for fear that they would arrest me.
- B. There was a knock at the door but I did not answer due to fear of being arrested.
- C. They knocked at the door but I did not answer it for fear of being arrested.
- D. There was a knock at the door but did not contest it in fear of being arrested.

II. Grammar and Usage

These questions assess applicants' ability to apply the basic rules of grammar, usage and sentence structure in English and Spanish.

A. Spanish

For each of the following questions, select the sentence which is **most correct** according to the rules of standard Spanish including grammar, usage and sentence structure.

11.

- A. El museo no exhibió las obras de Monet sino que exhibió las de Picasso.
- B. El museo exhibió las obras de Monet sino que exhibió las de Picasso.
- C. El museo no exhibió las obras de Monet si no que exhibió las de Picasso.
- D. El museo no exhibió las obras de Monet sino que no exhibió las de Picasso.

12.

Ellos no _____ a la escuela si la lluvia no aminoraba.

- A. irían
- B. fueron
- C. van
- D. asisten

13.

Si el artículo _____ mejor traducido, podría entenderse.

- A. estuvo
- B. estuviera
- C. estaba
- D. estaría

14.

Era muy posible que ella _____ logrado su propósito.

- A. hubo
- B. hubiera
- C. había
- D. haya

15.

Esto no quiere decir que no _____ antes movimientos semejantes.

- A. existió
- B. existieran
- C. existiera
- D. existe

B. English

For each of the following questions, select the sentence which is **most correct** according to the rules of standard English including grammar, usage and sentence structure.

16.

- A. My friends and me saw the movie six times.
- B. My friends and me seen the movie six times.
- C. My friends and I saw the movie six times.
- D. My friends and I seen the movie six times.

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 counseled 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. 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.

III. Vocabulary

These questions, presented in English and Spanish, assess applicants' knowledge of general vocabulary including words, phrases or idioms commonly used in court-related situations.

A. Spanish - Synonyms

Select the option which most nearly has the **SAME** meaning as the target word or phrase.

21.

Fraternidad

- A. tesoro
- B. incienso
- C. metalúrgica
- D. hermandad

22.

Devenir

- A. llegar
- B. acaecer
- C. decidir
- D. recibir

23.

Goloso

- A. grandioso
- B. Hermoso
- C. Comilón
- D. altivo

24.

Chato

- A. aplastado
- B. alto
- C. lento
- D. delgado

25.

Convicción

- A. encaelzmiento
- B. cercenamiento
- C. convencimiento
- D. hostigamiento

Spanish - Antonyms

Select the option which is closest to the **OPPOSITE** in meaning of the target word or phrase.

26.

Obstáculo

- A. hipermetropía
- B. ámbito
- C. concienciado
- D. asistencia

27.

Ratificar

- A. razonar
- B. cambiar
- C. entonar
- D. permanecer

28.

Pulcritud

- A. suciedad
- B. esmero
- C. temeridad
- D. aseo

29.

Cadencia

- A. disonancia
- B. acorde
- C. decencia
- D. falta

30.

Perspicacia

- A. torpeza
- B. presteza
- C. destreza
- D. maleza

B. English - Synonyms

Select the option which most nearly has the **SAME** meaning as the target word or phrase.

31.

Truncated

- A. cut short
- B. under duress
- C. misrepresented
- D. long-winded

32.

Labyrinth

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

33.

Pardon

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

34.

Veracity

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

35.

Onus

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

English - Antonyms

Select the option which is closest to the **OPPOSITE** in meaning of the target word or phrase.

36.

Procrastinate

- A. pacify
- B. insult
- C. instigate
- D. expedite

37.

Impede

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

38.

Felonious

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

39.

Mourn

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

40.

Deplete

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

IV Reading, Understanding and Interpreting Written Material

These questions assess applicants' ability to comprehend written material in English and Spanish. The following formats are used:

Format A: Applicants are presented with brief reading selections followed by questions pertaining to the information contained in the selections. All of the information required to answer the questions is provided in the selections.

Format B: Applicants are presented with short written sentences or passages with a word or phrase missing. From a list of four options, applicants must select the word or phrase that best fits into the blank space so that the sentence makes the most sense. Questions are in the same language as the reading selections. Applicants are not required to have any special knowledge related to the content area covered in the selections.

Format A - Spanish

Based solely upon the reading passages below, choose the option that **best** answers the stated question. Use only information provided in the passage, do not use any prior knowledge that you may have on the subject.

El lingüista boliviano Carlos Coello participó en los paneles dedicados a debatir los aspectos ideológicos y culturales de la identidad del idioma español. En su mesa se discutió "El español y las comunidades indígenas de hoy", para cuyo efecto Coello presentó una ponencia en la que describe los rasgos de identidad del castellano que se habla en Bolivia, influido por el aimara y el quechua, en contraposición a los del castellano que se habla en España.

Los rasgos lingüísticos de estos idiomas, a criterio del experto, repercuten de manera notable en nuestra forma de expresarnos. El extranjero menos avisado se percata de inmediato, cuando visita alguna de las ciudades de Bolivia, que la gente habla en las calles y en las plazas un castellano muy matizado y distinto del que se oye en otras latitudes de América.

Según el último Censo Nacional de Población y Vivienda en Bolivia en 2001, quienes hablan quechua en Bolivia alcanzan 2.1 millones de habitantes, y quienes hablan aimara son 1.4 millones de personas. Estos datos le dan pie a Coello para aseverar que "en términos absolutos aumentó el número de los que hablan castellano, quechua o aimara, pero, en términos relativos, en los últimos 25 años, el porcentaje de los primeros incrementó; en cambio, el de los dos últimos sufrió un pequeño decremento. Creció el número de bilingües, de los cuales la gran mayoría tiene el quechua o el aimara como lengua materna.

41.

A criterio del lingüista Coello, ¿cuál de las siguientes razones explica las aparentes discrepancias entre el castellano boliviano y el de España?

- A. La influencia de lenguas aborígenes.
- B. La enorme distancia entre ambas naciones.
- C. La extensión de la educación a sectores rurales donde antes no llegaba.
- D. Las cada vez mayores migraciones del campo a la ciudad.

Questions **42** through **45** are based on the passage below:

Eran tristes los atardeceres de aquel Campeche que en el noventa y seis resbalaba la pendiente de una decadencia irremediable. Delante de nuestros balcones las faenas del puerto mantenían un simulacro de actividad, pero las calles interiores, aun las principales, se veían solas y abandonadas. Y cuando las cruzaba un transeúnte se hacía más patente el vacío porque dentro de las casas eran pocos los ojos a espiar. Un éxodo continuado iba dejando vacías las moradas. Los vestigios de la antigua prosperidad hacían más punzante la devastación inevitable. Filas de ventanas con rejas y zaguanes suntuosos, permanecían cerrados y sin anuncios de alquiler, como si los dueños se hubiesen cansado de esperar inquilinos. En las barriadas más pobres, a veces, toda una cuadra de casas se caía por abandono, rotos ya todos los vidrios, sueltos los quicios de las vidrieras. En las mansiones principales solían quedar únicamente los viejos. La gente joven emigraba en busca de quehacer lucrativo. Un puerto que tuvo astilleros famosos por el buen corte, la riqueza de la madera de sus barcos, dejaba podrir los pilotes de las antiguas defensas. Naves extranjeras reemplazaban el pabellón nacional y los marinos que no se marchaban descendían de categoría convirtiéndose en pescadores.

42.

El pueblo descrito en este párrafo estaba:

- A. evolucionando al compás de la nueva tecnología.
- B. reponiendo su antigua prosperidad.
- C. desechando lo viejo para adoptar lo nuevo.
- D. consumiéndose poco a poco en todas sus facetas.

43.

Las empresas navieras experimentaban:

- A. una mengua inesperada en inversiones.
- B. la caída repentina de la industria pesquera.
- C. un aumento en el número de marinos de primera.
- D. un arruinamiento de ciertas de sus instalaciones portuarias.

44.

El autor de este párrafo relata todo con:

- A. un tono mal agradecido.
- B. una actitud acusadora.
- C. una resignación melancólica.
- D. agudeza científica.

45.

El escritor encuentra que la situación de este pueblo:

- A. se puede entender a la luz de la economía.
- B. se puede rectificar con el pasar de los años.
- C. se va desmoronando, carente el pueblo de los medios para mejorarla.
- D. se va disminuyendo paulatinamente para concentrar sus recursos.

Format A - English

Based solely upon the reading passage below, choose the option that **best** answers the stated question. Use only information provided in the passage, do not use any prior knowledge that you may have on the subject.

46.

“Kendra’s Law” establishes a court procedure for ordering individuals suffering from a mental illness to accept and receive “assisted outpatient treatment” (AOT). A court order is obtained that will direct an appropriate agency to provide or arrange for services for the identified individual as outlined in a written treatment plan submitted by an examining physician. This initial order is effective for a six-month period and can be extended for successive periods of one-year increments upon a judge’s order. In cases where the patient fails to comply with the ordered treatment or poses a significant risk of harm to themselves or others, the patient may be involuntarily confined as an inpatient to a hospital or other treatment facility.

Which of the following statements regarding Kendra’s Law expresses the information contained in the above passage most accurately? Kendra’s Law:

- A. ensures that an examining physician is providing psychotherapy to individuals with a mental illness.
- B. ensures that individuals with mental illness receive "assisted outpatient treatment."
- C. orders any agency to provide services to individuals with mental illnesses.
- D. orders individuals with mental illness to receive appropriate treatment for six months.

47.

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.

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 **48** through **50** 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.

48.

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.

49.

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

50.

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.

Format B- English

Select the option that **best completes** the given sentence and makes the most sense.

51.

After hours of listening to boisterous World War II stories, the children finally escaped from their _____ grandfather.

- A. evasive
- B. spiritual
- C. garrulous
- D. nebulous

52.

Studies have shown that longevity in the Far East is _____ to the inhabitants' wholesome diet.

- A. attributed
- B. discovered
- C. disconnected
- D. contributed

53.

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

54.

The military was secretly intent on removing the dictator, so the planned operation had to be _____.

- A. complex
- B. vulnerable
- C. transparent
- D. covert

55.

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

Format B - Spanish

Select the option that **best completes** the given sentence and makes the most sense.

56.

El Juez le _____ que si no comparecía lo encarcelaría.

- A. encargó
- B. adhirió
- C. ensañó
- D. advirtió

57.

En una cierta época todos los años ese señor _____ un viaje de excursión.

- A. organizara
- B. realizaba
- C. planearía
- D. proyectó

58.
Para funcionar bien, era preciso que la tarjeta _____ correctamente en la hendidura.

- A. constara
- B. combara
- C. cubriera
- D. cupiera

59.
Era menester que _____ la obra.

- A. se presentaría
- B. se estudiaba
- C. se ensayase
- D. se aprendía

60.
Ese viaje fue muy _____ yo digo.

- A. primero de lo que
- B. antes de que
- C. anterior al que
- D. antecedente de que

V. Legal Terminology

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

61.
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

62.

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

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

63.

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

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

64.

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

65.

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

66.

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

67.

Legal assistance which is free of charge is:

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

68.

Offenders who repeatedly commit the same crimes are involved in:

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

69.

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

70.

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	A	11	A	21	D	31	A	41	A	51	C	61	C
2	B	12	A	22	B	32	C	42	D	52	A	62	B
3	D	13	B	23	C	33	D	43	D	53	A	63	A
4	C	14	B	24	A	34	B	44	C	54	D	64	A
5	B	15	B	25	C	35	A	45	C	55	A	65	C
6	B	16	C	26	D	36	D	46	B	56	D	66	D
7	B	17	A	27	B	37	B	47	A	57	B	67	C
8	D	18	C	28	A	38	A	48	C	58	D	68	D
9	C	19	D	29	A	39	C	49	A	59	C	69	C
10	A	20	B	30	A	40	B	50	B	60	C	70	A