

**NEW YORK STATE UNIFIED COURT SYSTEM
OFFICE OF COURT ADMINISTRATION**



**COURT INTERPRETER (SPANISH)
EXAMINATION GUIDE**

The New York State Office of Court Administration has developed this test guide to familiarize you with the Court Assistant examination. This test guide provides at least one sample question for each subject area listed. The questions shown below are for illustrative purposes only. They are examples of the different question types and formats that candidates may encounter on the multiple-choice examination. Questions that appear on the actual examination vary in difficulty and may be easier or more difficult than the questions illustrated below. This test guide provides the solution and correct answer for each sample question presented. You should study these in order to understand how the correct or best answers were determined. There are 120 questions on the actual examination and applicants have three (3) hours to complete

The examination for Court Interpreter (Spanish) is open-competitive and consists of a Multiple-choice Test and an Oral Test, as described below, each of which accounts for 50% of the total score. *Applicants must pass the Multiple-choice test in order to be eligible to take the oral test.* After the Multiple-choice test has been scored, successful applicants will be notified when to appear for the oral test. Both the Multiple-choice and oral tests will be held in test centers throughout New York State.

Scope of Exam/Subject of Examination:

The examination consists of a Multiple-choice Test and an Oral Test, as described below, each of which accounts for 50% of the total score. *Applicants must pass the Multiple-choice test in order to be eligible to take the oral test.* After the Multiple-choice test has been scored, successful applicants will be notified when to appear for the oral test. Both the multiple-choice and oral tests will be held in test centers throughout New York State.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE TEST: The test will consist of multiple-choice questions designed to assess the following:

1. TRANSLATING WRITTEN MATERIAL

These questions assess applicants' ability to translate written selections from one language into another. Applicants will be given written selections in English and Spanish. The applicants must select the most accurate Spanish or English translations for the given selections.

2. ENGLISH/SPANISH GRAMMAR AND USAGE

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

3. VOCABULARY

These questions, presented in English and Spanish, assess applicants' knowledge of general vocabulary including words, phrases or idioms commonly used in court situations. Applicants select from four alternative choices, the word, phrase or idiom that most closely has the same (or opposite) meaning of a given word, phrase or idiom.

4. 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 are instructed to select the word or phrase that best fits into the sentence. Questions are in the same language as the reading selections. Applicants are not required to have any special knowledge relating to the content area covered in the selections.

Applicants must obtain a passing score on the multiple-choice test in order to be invited to participate in the oral test.

TIMING – Applicants are given a total of 3 hours to complete the multiple-choice examination.

ORAL TEST:

The oral performance examination is individually administered by a proctor. Applicants are presented with materials that court interpreters typically encounter in courtroom situations. Applicants are required to interpret from English to Spanish and from Spanish to English. The oral performance examination consists of the following six (6) parts:

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

Parts 1 and 2 are court-related documents and Parts 3 through 6 are simulated courtroom situations presented in an audiovisual format. Each part of the oral performance test indicates the required mode of interpreting to be used. When applicants are interpreting, they should speak in a clear and normal tone of voice; all applicant responses are audio-recorded. The duration of the oral performance exam is approximately one (1) hour.

PART 1 - SIGHT TRANSLATION: ENGLISH TO SPANISH: This part of the exam assesses applicants' ability to sight translate from English to Spanish. Applicants are presented with a court-related document in English and are then required to orally translate the document into Spanish. Documents used for this part of the exam typically include excerpts from legal documents or affidavits from witnesses.

PART 2 - SIGHT TRANSLATION: SPANISH TO ENGLISH: This part of the exam assesses applicants' ability to sight translate from Spanish to English. Applicants are presented with a court-related document in Spanish and are then required to orally translate the document into English. Documents used for this part of the exam typically include witness statements or other legal documents written in Spanish.

Applicants are presented with both Parts 1 and 2 (two documents) together and have five (5) minutes to review the two documents. Applicants are then given ten (10) minutes to orally translate the two documents. The proctor will stop the applicants at the 10-minute mark even if applicants have not finished interpreting both documents.

PART 3 - CONSECUTIVE INTERPRETATION: This part of the exam assesses applicants' skills in consecutive interpreting. Applicants are presented with a video of a witness being questioned by an attorney. In this video, the attorney is questioning the witness in English, and the witness is responding to the questions in Spanish. Applicants must wait for the question or statement in English to be completed before beginning to interpret into Spanish. When the witness responds in Spanish, applicants interpret the response into English. Applicants must continue to consecutively interpret from English to Spanish and Spanish to English. Source texts for this part of the exam include excerpts from transcripts of direct or cross-examinations of Spanish-speaking witnesses during actual trials.

PART 4 - ONE-VOICE SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETING: ENGLISH TO SPANISH: This part of the exam assesses applicants' skills in simultaneous interpreting from English to Spanish. Applicants are presented with a video of one person speaking in English and are required to interpret from English to Spanish while the person is speaking (simultaneously). Applicants must be able to listen to what is being said and interpret at the same time, usually, at a speed of only a few words behind the speaker (known as "shadowing"). Source texts for this part of the exam include excerpts from judge's instructions to a jury, opening statements or closing arguments.

PART 5 - ONE-VOICE SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETING: SPANISH TO ENGLISH: This part of the exam assesses applicants' skills in simultaneous interpreting from Spanish to English. Applicants are presented with a video of one person speaking in Spanish and are required to interpret from Spanish to English while the person is speaking (simultaneously). Applicants must be able to listen to what is being said and interpret at the same time, usually, at a speed of only a few words behind the speaker ("shadowing"). Source texts for this part of the exam include excerpts from victim impact statements or depositions.

PART 6 - TWO-VOICE SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETING: ENGLISH TO SPANISH: This part of the exam assesses applicants' skills in simultaneous interpreting. Applicants are presented with a video of a dialogue between two individuals in a legal proceeding who are both speaking in English. Applicants are required to interpret both speakers from English into Spanish while the individuals are speaking (simultaneously). Applicants must be able to listen to what is being said and be able to interpret at the same time. Source texts for this part of the exam include excerpts taken from transcripts of actual court proceedings. Vocabulary in these materials may include some specialized medical, forensic, and legal terminology.

Spanish

Applicants must obtain a passing score on the multiple-choice test in order to be invited to participate in the oral test.

GRADING THE EXAM

In general, for multiple-choice exams, final scores are converted from raw scores (*number of questions answered correctly*) and placed on a scale that ranges from 0 to 100. The passing raw score (*number of questions answered correctly*) is determined after an exam is given and all the test results have been analyzed. A test taker must receive a scaled score of 70 in order to pass an examination. A scaled score of 70 may or may not be equivalent to 70% of the questions answered correctly on any exam. For example, if an exam contains 100 questions and it's determined that a test taker needs to have gotten at least 65 questions correct in order to pass the exam, then 65 (the raw score), is converted to a scaled score of 70, and the test taker will receive a 70 on the exam. Similarly, if an exam contains 100 questions and it's determined that a test taker needs to have gotten at least 80 questions correct in order to pass the exam, then 80 (the raw score), is converted to a scaled score of 70, and the test taker will receive a 70 on the exam.

The passing score is also in part determined by Rules of the of Chief Judge, §25.13:

The Chief Administrator of the Courts may authorize the use of any professionally recognized examination scoring and conversion methods, taking into consideration the type of examination, the examination difficulty, the size of the applicant population in relation to the number of positions to be filled, labor market conditions, or other factors which can affect the number of eligibles.

RATING OF THE ORAL PERFORMANCE EXAMINATION

The audio recording of each applicant's performance is rated by a professional (federally certified) bilingual expert. The primary consideration in rating the exam is accuracy. The oral performance exam consists of 115 pre-selected words and phrases called "scoring units" that are embedded across the six parts of the test. The rater listens to the applicant's recording to determine the total number of scoring units correctly interpreted. A scoring unit is considered as interpreted correctly if the word/phrase is known to the rater as being of acceptable usage or is found in a standard dictionary and is used at the appropriate register (*level of formality of spoken or written word*).

Oral Score

In evaluating applicants' performance, the raters record the number of "scoring units" which were correctly interpreted by the applicant. The maximum possible score units (*in parentheses*) for each of the sections are as follows: English Sight Translation (10), Spanish Sight Translation (10), Consecutive Q & A (40), One-Voice Simultaneous (English → Spanish) (15), One-Voice Simultaneous (Spanish → English) (15), Two-Voice Simultaneous (25).

Global Rating Score

As part of the rating process, raters also assign a structured global rating score for each applicant. The five-point rating scale is described below. It assesses applicants' overall performance with respect to fluency, clarity of pronunciation, accuracy and completeness of applicants' interpretation which includes vocabulary, grammar, idioms, and register, in both languages. The possible global score ratings are: I, II, III, IV, and V. The following criteria are used to assign the global rating score and associated points.

Rating Points

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| I. | +10 | Outstanding. Performing at the level of an educated native speaker in both languages. Interpretations are accurate. Little or no accent in either language that interferes with comprehension. Very few omissions, even in the most difficult passages. |
| II. | +5 | Has near-native command of both languages. Occasional errors limited to difficult or complex passages at fast conversational speed, or with highly technical or specialized terminology. Omissions are infrequent. Any noticeable accent is easily understandable. |
| III. | 0 | Overall adequate interpretation. May have minor difficulties with less common vocabulary. Occasional omissions. Less than adroit handling of complicated sentence structure, but with no serious misunderstandings. May exhibit some difficulty with long passages in simultaneous and/or consecutive interpreting. Accent noticeable but does not interfere with understanding of the interpretation. |
| IV. | -5 | Has basic command of both languages but makes some mistakes or omissions even in easy passages. Exhibits some hesitancy going from one language to the other which diminishes the quality of the interpreting. Occasionally substitutes |

summarization for interpreting. Intonational patterns that impact negatively upon comprehension. Accent interferes with comprehension of interpretation.

- V.- 10 Although some language skills are evident, significant and/or frequent omissions. Serious mistakes/misunderstandings. Frequently resorts to summarization. Non-native word groupings that impede comprehension. Distracting accent that interferes with understanding of interpretation.

If an applicant receives a 'I' on the global score, 10 points are added to the oral score. For a 'II', 5 points are added. For a 'III', there is no change to the oral score. For a 'IV', 5 points are subtracted from the oral score and for a rating of 'V', 10 points are subtracted.

Final Score

The **Final Score** on the Court Interpreter (Spanish) Exam is equal to 50% of the **Converted Adjusted Oral Score** and 50% of the **Converted Multiple-Choice Exam Score**. Each component accounts for 50% of the **Final Score**.

Practice Oral Examination:

[Parts I and II](#)

[Parts III - VI](#)