



Candidate Guide To The Language Assessment Testing Program For Court Interpreting

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OUR COMMITMENT

The Unified Court System is committed to ensuring that court interpreting professionals provide fair and impartial assistance to the diverse, multilingual community we serve. This Guide provides information about the language assessment testing program and how to become a per diem court interpreter for the NYS Courts.

The Language Assessment Testing Program is coordinated by the New York State Office of Court Administration (OCA) and administers examinations for interpreters seeking to be listed in its Registry of Per Diem Court Interpreters. Presently, the Language Assessment Program offers examinations consisting of a written English proficiency test and an oral exam in 26 designated languages:

- Albanian
- Arabic
- BCS (Bosnian/ Croatian/ Serbian)
- Bengali
- Cantonese*
- French
- Greek
- Haitian Creole
- Hebrew
- Hindi
- Italian
- Japanese
- Korean
- Mandarin*
- Polish
- Portuguese
- Punjabi-Eastern
- Russian
- Urdu
- Vietnamese
- Wolof

*Simplified and/or Traditional

These tests are used by court administrators to identify competent interpreters for per diem assignments in the New York State Courts. Oral exams are currently being developed in additional languages. Candidates for per diem assignments in languages for which no oral exam is presently available must pass the written English proficiency test and provide verifiable evidence of competency in the indicated language.

OCA also conducts a separate competitive civil service examination every four years for the employment of full time permanent Spanish Court Interpreters.



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 2 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 NYS 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.

PER DIEM RATES

- \$385 for a full day (more than four hours)
- \$220 for a half day (up to four hours)
- There is no compensation offered for travel time

STEPS TO BECOME A REGISTERED PER DIEM COURT INTERPRETER FOR THE NYS COURTS

Testing

The application registration period is open for the Per Diem Court Interpreter Written Proficiency Examination, and registration will continue year-round. To apply for the Per Diem Court Interpreter examination, you must complete the [online application](#). After submitting the application, you will immediately receive a confirmation email with information about the scheduling process for the multiple-choice Per Diem Court Interpreter examination.

For Spoken Language

To become a registered per diem court interpreter for the NYS Courts, please follow these steps. You need to demonstrate proficiency in your chosen language(s).

Step One

1. Study the available resources listed below. Familiarize yourself with what is required to succeed.
 - [Sample Exams and Test Questions for Prospective Interpreters](#)
 - [Preparation Tools for Interpreters](#)
 - [General Information](#)
2. Complete the [Online Per Diem Court Interpreter Application](#) for language skills screening.



3. If you were certified in another state and want to apply for Reciprocity or a Written Examination Waiver, complete the [online Per Diem Court Interpreter Application](#). For more information, review the [Reciprocity Provisions](#). Please note: you will have to attach certified copies of examination results, certifications and/or credentials that can be verified to your application—if applicable.

Step Two

1. Candidates who are successful in this examination (or if an examination waiver is granted) are then invited to either take an oral examination and/or submit references.
2. Candidates who successfully pass the Written Test and the Oral Performance Language Assessment, must successfully undergo a criminal history investigation before accepting court interpreting assignments and participate in an ethics training seminar when offered.
3. 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.
4. Upon successful completion of this process your name will be added to the NYS Registry of Per Diem Court Interpreters and used by to the courts.

For Sign Language

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.

If you want to become a per diem sign language interpreter for the NY Unified Court System, you must complete the [online application](#). Please note: You will need to attach your credentials to your application.

ABOUT THE LANGUAGE SKILLS SCREENING PROCESS

Court Interpreting Exams

Interpreter candidates are required to pass a multiple-choice written examination assessing English Language Proficiency and basic Legal Terminology, which covers 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.

Candidates who are successful on this written examination are then invited to take an oral examination, currently administered in the following languages: Albanian, Arabic, BCS (Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian), Bengali, Cantonese, French, Greek, Haitian Creole, Hebrew, Hindi, Italian,



Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi (Eastern), Russian, Urdu, Vietnamese, and Wolof. Candidates interested in interpreting languages that are not listed above are required to submit appropriate professional references related to their interpreting skills.

Civil Service Exams

Candidates who passed the civil service exam may also be eligible for inclusion on the New York State Registry of Per Diem Court Interpreters and provide interpreting services, on an as-needed, freelance basis.

For additional information on the open competitive exam, visit the [NYS Courts Careers website](#), or email the Civil Service Administration Unit: CivilServiceAdmin@nycourts.gov

WRITTEN TEST AND ORAL PERFORMANCE LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT

To become 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.

SAMPLE EXAMS AND TEST QUESTIONS FOR PROSPECTIVE INTERPRETERS

Written Portion

All candidates are required to pass a multiple-choice written examination assessing English Language Proficiency and basic Legal Terminology, which covers 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.



- [Sample Written Test of English Proficiency- for Languages Other than Spanish](#). The Written Exam (for all languages OTHER THAN SPANISH) assesses applicants' English language proficiency and knowledge of legal terminology.
- [General Information about the Written Test of English Proficiency](#) (languages other than Spanish)
- [Sample Test Questions for Written Examination](#) (SPANISH interpreters only). These questions assess applicants' language proficiency in both English and Spanish, and knowledge of legal terminology.

Oral Portion

Candidates who are successful in this examination are then invited to take an oral examination which is currently administered in the following languages:

- Albanian
- Arabic
- BCS (Bosnian/ Croatian/ Serbian)
- Bengali
- Cantonese
- French
- Greek
- Haitian Creole
- Hebrew
- Hindi
- Italian
- Japanese
- Korean
- Mandarin
- Polish
- Portuguese
- Punjabi-Eastern
- Russian
- Urdu
- Vietnamese
- Wolof

Candidates interested in interpreting languages that are not listed above are required to submit appropriate professional references related to their interpreting skills.

Modes of Interpreting

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

1. Consecutive Interpreting requires that the interpreter allow the speaker to complete a thought or statement before giving their interpretation. This mode should be used when LEP or Deaf or Hard of Hearing persons are giving their testimony, or are in direct dialogues with the judge, counsel, or an officer of the court.
2. Simultaneous Interpreting requires that the interpreter speak contemporaneously with the speaker whose statements are being interpreted. This mode is used in opening and closing statements and any ongoing exchanges.
3. Sight Translation requires the interpreter to read a document or other written material in one language and immediately provide an oral translation.

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. Target Language Sight Translation
3. Consecutive Question and Answer (English and the Target Language)
4. One-Voice Simultaneous (English)
5. One-Voice Simultaneous (Target 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 target language and everything spoken in the target language into English. All 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 target 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.

Practice Videos for Oral Assessment

- [Practice Video for Oral Language Exam](#) – sections III-VI Spanish ([Transcript](#)). The Oral Exam assesses applicants' ability to interpret in various modes, i.e., sight, consecutive, and simultaneous in the six sections of the exam. Although this video is for the Spanish language only, the format is similar for exams in other languages.
- [Oral Language Exam, sample Sight Translations](#) – sections I-II, Spanish. The interpreter is given a written document in one language and asked to read it aloud in another language.

Important Links

- [Orientation Guide](#)
- [Practice Spanish Oral Exam-Parts I and II](#)
- [Practice Spanish Oral Exam- Parts III -VI](#)



QUALIFICATIONS FOR INTERPRETERS OF LANGUAGES IN WHICH THE UCS DOES NOT 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 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 later, 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 for other certifications accepted by the Unified Court System.

EXAMINATION SCORING

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.



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, visit Office of Language Access Resources website for more information.

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 with your local public library for recommended titles.

Finally, familiarize yourself with general test procedures and study guides, such as:

- [Sample Written Test of English Language Proficiency for Languages Other than Spanish](#)
- [Orientation Guide and Oral Practice Exams](#)
- <http://www.cs.ny.gov/testing/statetestguides.cfm>
- <http://www.nycourts.gov/COURTINTERPRETER/links.shtml>

HELPFUL TIPS FOR THE TEST

- Bring your admission letter and picture identification to the test site
- Instructions for getting to the test site
- 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.

CONTACT US

- Email: OLAPerDiemTest@nycourts.gov
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