



Court Interpreter

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Practice Questions

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1. A court interpreter's duty of confidentiality means the interpreter must:

- A. Not disclose information obtained during the interpreting assignment to unauthorized persons
- B. Refuse to interpret any sensitive testimony
- C. Share case information only with other interpreters
- D. Report all case details to the court clerk after each session

2. A court interpreter's primary ethical obligation regarding impartiality is to:

- A. Remain neutral and refrain from expressing personal opinions about any party
- B. Support the party who hired them if a conflict arises
- C. Advocate for the non-English-speaking party to ensure fairness
- D. Defer to the judge's opinion when uncertain about neutrality

3. What does the term 'arraignment' refer to in criminal procedure?

- A. A court proceeding where the defendant is formally read the charges and asked to enter a plea
- B. The process by which a grand jury returns an indictment
- C. A hearing to determine whether bail should be granted
- D. The final stage of a trial where the verdict is announced

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4. In consecutive interpreting, when does the interpreter begin rendering the message into the target language?

- A. After the speaker has finished a complete utterance or segment
- B. While the speaker is still talking
- C. Before the speaker begins speaking
- D. Only after the entire proceeding has concluded



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5. Before interpreting in court, an interpreter is typically required to take an oath or affirmation. What is the PRIMARY purpose of this oath?

- A. To bind the interpreter to accurately and impartially interpret everything said
- B. To confirm the interpreter holds a state-issued license
- C. To waive the interpreter's right to refuse an assignment
- D. To establish the interpreter's hourly billing rate on the record

6. When is the court interpreter typically administered an oath?

- A. Only at the start of a jury trial
- B. Only when interpreting for the defendant
- C. At the beginning of each proceeding in which they serve
- D. Once per calendar year in a general swearing-in ceremony

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7. A court interpreter's primary ethical obligation is to remain:

- A. Supportive of the non-English-speaking party
- B. Aligned with the interests of the retaining attorney
- C. Impartial and neutral toward all parties
- D. Deferential to the judge at all times

8. What is a 'subpoena' in legal terminology?

- A. A court order releasing a defendant on bail
- B. A court order compelling a person to appear or produce documents
- C. A written summary of charges filed by the prosecution
- D. A legal document transferring property rights

9. Which of the following best describes the scope of a court interpreter's confidentiality obligation?

- A. It applies only to criminal proceedings
- B. It applies only when the client requests it
- C. It covers all information obtained in the course of the interpreting assignment
- D. It applies only to written documents, not spoken testimony

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10. An interpreter overhears a private attorney-client conversation while waiting in the hallway. The interpreter should:

- A. Report what was heard to the opposing counsel as a matter of fairness
- B. Keep the information strictly confidential and not disclose it to anyone
- C. Inform the judge to ensure proper court administration
- D. Share the information only with the court clerk for the record

11. What is 'probable cause' in the context of an arrest or search warrant?

- A. Absolute certainty that a crime has been committed
- B. A mere suspicion that a person may have committed a crime
- C. A reasonable belief, based on articulable facts, that a crime has been or is being committed
- D. Proof beyond a reasonable doubt that a suspect is guilty

12. Which interpreting mode requires the interpreter to listen and speak at virtually the same time?

- A. Consecutive interpreting
- B. Simultaneous interpreting
- C. Sight translation
- D. Summary interpreting

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13. A witness who objects to swearing on religious grounds should be offered which alternative?

- A. A notarized written statement submitted in advance
- B. Permission to testify without any sworn statement
- C. An affirmation to tell the truth under penalty of perjury
- D. A reduced-scrutiny oath administered by the clerk only

14. An interpreter's oath in federal court requires the interpreter to promise to:

- A. Summarize statements to assist juror comprehension
- B. Interpret accurately to the best of their ability
- C. Alert counsel whenever a witness appears to be lying
- D. Refuse to interpret profane or offensive language



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15. Which action would violate an interpreter's duty of impartiality?

- A. Interpreting a witness's hesitations and pauses accurately
- B. Disclosing a potential conflict of interest to the court
- C. Advising the defendant on how to answer a difficult question
- D. Requesting a short recess when fatigued

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16. What is the meaning of 'habeas corpus' in legal proceedings?

- A. A plea of not guilty by reason of insanity
- B. A court order dismissing charges for lack of evidence
- C. A writ requiring a detained person to be brought before a court to test the lawfulness of detention
- D. A formal accusation filed by a grand jury

17. After completing an interpreting assignment in a child custody case, an interpreter's neighbor asks what happened in court. The interpreter should:

- A. Share a brief summary since the neighbor is not a party
- B. Decline to discuss any details of the case
- C. Share general observations but no specific testimony
- D. Refer the neighbor to the public court record

18. When an attorney asks a compound question that is difficult to interpret accurately, the interpreter should:

- A. Paraphrase the question into simpler language to help the witness understand
- B. Skip any parts of the question that are unclear and interpret only what is understood
- C. Ask the attorney to repeat or rephrase the question before interpreting
- D. Interpret the parts that are clear and explain the rest in their own words

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19. In the law of evidence, what is 'hearsay'?

- A. Any statement made outside the courtroom
- B. Testimony from a witness who did not personally observe the event
- C. A written document offered as evidence without authentication
- D. An out-of-court statement offered to prove the truth of the matter asserted



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20. When a court interpreter reads a written document aloud in a different language, this task is called:

- A. Consecutive interpreting
- B. Simultaneous interpreting
- C. Sight translation
- D. Summary translation

21. When administering the interpreter's oath, the court clerk asks the interpreter to swear to 'truly translate.' Which conduct would violate that oath?

- A. Asking the judge for clarification when a legal term has no direct equivalent
- B. Summarizing a witness's lengthy answer instead of interpreting it in full
- C. Pausing briefly to recall the precise translation of a technical term
- D. Interpreting in the first person rather than the third person

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22. In consecutive interpretation, the interpreter begins rendering the message:

- A. After the speaker has paused or completed a segment
- B. While the speaker is still talking
- C. Only after the entire testimony is complete
- D. After reviewing written notes provided by the court

23. An interpreter recognizes the defendant as a neighbor. What is the MOST appropriate course of action?

- A. Proceed normally since personal familiarity does not affect professional judgment
- B. Disclose the relationship to the court and allow the judge to decide
- C. Refuse to interpret and leave without explanation
- D. Ask the defense attorney whether to proceed

24. What does 'in limine' mean in the context of pre-trial motions?

- A. A motion to dismiss for failure to state a claim
- B. A motion filed before trial to exclude or include specific evidence
- C. A motion requesting a change of venue
- D. A motion to compel discovery from the opposing party

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25. When a court interpreter is present during a confidential attorney-client meeting, the communication is:

- A. No longer privileged because a third party is present
- B. Only privileged if the attorney requests it in writing
- C. Privileged only if it occurs in a private room
- D. Privileged because the interpreter is considered a necessary agent of communication

26. A non-English-speaking defendant asks the interpreter to explain the legal process to them. The interpreter should:

- A. Explain the process thoroughly because it helps communication
- B. Provide a brief explanation since the defendant clearly needs it
- C. Explain only the parts the interpreter personally understands well
- D. Decline and refer the defendant to their attorney for legal explanations

27. What is the legal meaning of 'chain of custody' in reference to physical evidence?

- A. The documented record of the handling, transfer, and storage of evidence from collection to court presentation
- B. The right of a defendant to confront the witnesses presenting evidence against them
- C. The order in which witnesses are called to testify about the evidence
- D. The prosecution's obligation to list all physical evidence it intends to use at trial

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28. Chuchotage is the French term for which interpreting mode?

- A. Consecutive interpreting
- B. Sight translation
- C. Relay interpreting
- D. Whispered interpreting

29. Which mode of interpretation requires the interpreter to render the message simultaneously as the speaker talks, with virtually no lag?

- A. Consecutive interpretation
- B. Sight translation
- C. Summarization
- D. Simultaneous interpretation



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30. Sight translation is the process of:

- A. Translating a written document and submitting it in writing
- B. Silently reviewing a document before testifying about its contents
- C. Orally rendering a written document into another language in real time
- D. Paraphrasing a document's key points for the judge



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Answer Key & Explanations

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- 1. A — Not disclose information obtained during the interpreting assignment to unauthorized persons**
Confidentiality requires the interpreter to protect all information learned during an assignment and not share it with anyone not authorized to receive it. Disclosure to unauthorized parties violates professional ethics.
- 2. A — Remain neutral and refrain from expressing personal opinions about any party**
Court interpreters must remain strictly impartial, avoiding any appearance of bias toward any party, attorney, or outcome. Expressing personal opinions or favoring any side violates the fundamental duty of neutrality.
- 3. A — A court proceeding where the defendant is formally read the charges and asked to enter a plea**
An arraignment is the post-indictment (or post-information) proceeding at which the defendant appears before the court, hears the formal charges, and enters a plea of guilty, not guilty, or no contest.
- 4. A — After the speaker has finished a complete utterance or segment**
Consecutive interpreting requires the interpreter to wait until the speaker completes a segment or utterance before rendering it in the target language. This differs from simultaneous interpreting, which occurs in real time.
- 5. A — To bind the interpreter to accurately and impartially interpret everything said**
The oath obligates the interpreter to render a faithful, complete, and impartial interpretation. It creates a legal duty of accuracy and impartiality, and false interpretation after oath can constitute perjury.
- 6. C — At the beginning of each proceeding in which they serve**
Interpreters are sworn or affirmed at the outset of each proceeding. The oath binds them to render a faithful, impartial interpretation for that specific event.
- 7. C — Impartial and neutral toward all parties**
Court interpreters must remain impartial and neutral. They serve the court, not any individual party, and must avoid any conduct that favors one side over another.
- 8. B — A court order compelling a person to appear or produce documents**
A subpoena is a formal legal order requiring a person to appear before a court (subpoena ad testificandum) or to produce documents (subpoena duces tecum). Failure to comply can result in contempt of court.
- 9. C — It covers all information obtained in the course of the interpreting assignment**
The confidentiality obligation is broad and covers all information—spoken or written—that the interpreter obtains during an assignment, regardless of whether the client explicitly requests it.
- 10. B — Keep the information strictly confidential and not disclose it to anyone**
All information an interpreter obtains in the course of their duties is confidential, including overheard attorney-client communications. Disclosing such information violates both confidentiality obligations and attorney-client privilege.



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11. C — A reasonable belief, based on articulable facts, that a crime has been or is being committed
Probable cause requires more than a bare suspicion but less than proof beyond a reasonable doubt. It is a reasonable ground to believe that a person has committed a crime or that evidence of crime will be found in a particular place.

12. B — Simultaneous interpreting

Simultaneous interpreting requires the interpreter to render the source message into the target language in real time, while the speaker is still talking. This is the most cognitively demanding mode.

13. C — An affirmation to tell the truth under penalty of perjury

Federal Rule of Evidence 603 and most state equivalents require every witness to declare by oath or affirmation that they will testify truthfully. An affirmation carries equal legal weight to an oath and accommodates religious or conscientious objections.

14. B — Interpret accurately to the best of their ability

The interpreter's oath (28 U.S.C. § 1827) requires a faithful, impartial rendering — not summarizing, editorializing, or filtering content. Even offensive language must be interpreted.

15. C — Advising the defendant on how to answer a difficult question

Advising a party on how to answer a question constitutes advocacy, which violates the interpreter's duty of impartiality. The interpreter's role is to convey language, not to coach witnesses.

16. C — A writ requiring a detained person to be brought before a court to test the lawfulness of detention

Habeas corpus is a fundamental legal writ that requires a custodian to produce a detained person before the court. It protects individuals against unlawful or arbitrary detention and is a cornerstone of civil liberty.

17. B — Decline to discuss any details of the case

The interpreter must decline to discuss case details with anyone not authorized to receive that information, including neighbors or friends. This protects the parties' privacy and maintains professional integrity.

18. C — Ask the attorney to repeat or rephrase the question before interpreting

The interpreter must render a complete and accurate interpretation. When accuracy is at risk due to a complex or unclear question, the interpreter should request clarification rather than paraphrase or omit content.

19. D — An out-of-court statement offered to prove the truth of the matter asserted

Hearsay is defined as a statement made out of court that is offered in court to prove the truth of what the statement asserts. Under the Federal Rules of Evidence Rule 801, such statements are generally inadmissible unless an exception applies.

20. C — Sight translation

Sight translation involves reading a written document in one language and rendering it orally in another language. It combines reading comprehension with oral interpreting skills.

21. B — Summarizing a witness's lengthy answer instead of interpreting it in full

Summarizing omits content and alters the record, directly violating the duty to render a complete and accurate interpretation. Asking for clarification, brief pauses, and first-person mode are all professionally acceptable or required practices.



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22. A — After the speaker has paused or completed a segment

Consecutive interpretation follows natural pause points. The speaker stops, allowing the interpreter to deliver the full segment before the speaker continues. This is the most common mode for question-and-answer testimony.

23. B — Disclose the relationship to the court and allow the judge to decide

Interpreters must disclose any relationship or potential conflict of interest to the presiding judge. The court, not the interpreter unilaterally, determines whether the relationship warrants disqualification.

24. B — A motion filed before trial to exclude or include specific evidence

A motion in limine (Latin: 'at the threshold') is made before or at the start of trial to request the judge rule on the admissibility of certain evidence before it is presented to the jury, preventing potentially prejudicial material from being heard.

25. D — Privileged because the interpreter is considered a necessary agent of communication

The presence of a court interpreter does not waive attorney-client privilege because the interpreter is treated as a necessary extension of the attorney-client relationship, facilitating communication rather than introducing an unauthorized third party.

26. D — Decline and refer the defendant to their attorney for legal explanations

Court interpreters must not go beyond their role as a language conduit. Providing legal advice or explanations falls outside the interpreter's function and could constitute unauthorized practice of law.

27. A — The documented record of the handling, transfer, and storage of evidence from collection to court presentation

Chain of custody tracks who collected evidence, who handled it, and how it was stored. A broken chain of custody may lead a court to exclude the evidence because its integrity cannot be verified.

28. D — Whispered interpreting

Chuchotage (from the French word for 'whispering') refers to whispered simultaneous interpreting, where the interpreter sits beside one or two listeners and interprets in a low voice without a booth or equipment.

29. D — Simultaneous interpretation

Simultaneous interpretation occurs in real time, overlapping with the speaker's delivery. It is typically used for large proceedings or where continuous flow is essential. Consecutive interpretation waits until the speaker pauses; sight translation renders written documents orally.

30. C — Orally rendering a written document into another language in real time

Sight translation is an oral, real-time rendering of a written text. It differs from written translation (which produces a written product) and is used when a party needs the content of a document conveyed verbally in court.



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