



How to work with an interpreter (face-to-face)

In this guide you will find some handy hints and tips which will enable you to get the most from your interpreter. It will provide insight in to how you can develop a good working relationship with the interpreter and optimise the success of your appointment with your client.

Arranging your Interpreter

When making your request with DA Languages, in order for the booking team to provide the most suitable interpreter for your needs, it is important that you provide the office with as much information as possible. If you know that you will be covering a matter that may be distressing (for example: sexual exploitation, child abuse or domestic violence) please ensure we are aware of this in advance. We can then speak with our interpreters ahead of the booking and ensure they are prepared and comfortable to attend the appointment. You would never need to disclose explicit details about a specific booking and we understand much of this will be confidential.

You will also need to consider whether you require a gender specific interpreter and whether your client speaks a particular dialect of a language; as such, it may be the case that the client requires an interpreter from their own country of origin. If it is possible for us to meet this need, it will help in making your client feel more comfortable and willing to communicate.

In terms of the actual logistics of the appointment, you will need to assess what you believe the realistic duration of the appointment to be. This is to avoid any unnecessary disruption to your appointment. Interpreters work on a freelance basis and if you have not requested an interpreter for long enough periods, it is possible the interpreter will need to leave before you have completed your session. The majority of interpreters attend several appointments a day and they will organise their diaries based on the durations provided.

It is also worth considering how accessible the venue will be to the interpreter. For many appointments it will be the first time they are attending the venue and they may not be familiar with the area. If it is known that the venue can be difficult to find, (for example, if the property is a block of flats that has several entrances) a satellite navigation may not recognise a post code (also common for new-builds); if these cases please do provide us with any useful navigation information, such as which side of the building to enter, or nearby landmarks that may be of use. Specific details will all be useful in assisting the interpreter to be punctual and to avoid any unnecessary delays.



Preparing for your appointment

- Arrange seating to allow easy communication where all 3 parties are equally distanced apart and are facing each other.
- Brief the interpreter of any relevant information they need to know in advance and also inform them of the aim of the session if relevant.
- If required, advise the interpreter accordingly on how you wish them to deal with cultural and other issues that may arise during the appointment.
- Plan your time carefully and develop a strategy on how you will monitor this during the appointment.

Getting the appointment started

- Introduce everyone in the room, informing the client and the interpreter of any additional professionals present. If the client is not sure who is attending during the appointment they may be reluctant to provide important information.
- Stress that everyone present in the room is bound by a strict code of ethics to maintain confidentiality.
- Make sure the client understands the roles of those in the room, who will be conducting the appointment and that the client understands the role of the interpreter. The interpreter will provide impartial, complete and confidential interpretation of the communication had during the appointment.
- Allow the interpreter time to introduce themselves to the client.
- An interpreter will only intervene if they need clarification before interpreting, they believe the client did not fully understand something that was said, they believe a cultural inference has been missed or if the interpreter is having difficulty hearing a member of the room as they are speaking too quietly or too quickly.

During the appointment

- Use short, concise sentences and pause frequently to allow the interpreter time to translate the information. However, you will need to avoid oversimplification of important information.
- Be sure to speak in the first person. For example, you should say: "How can I help you today?" **Do not refer to the interpreter** and say: "Ask him/her how I can help them today?" Also, when speaking to your client, maintain focus and eye contact with



them and not the interpreter. Your interest should be solely to your client in order to build trust, rapport and confidence between yourself and the client.

- You will, however, need to periodically check with the interpreter if you are speaking clearly and slowly enough.
- Where possible, provide written materials in your clients' native language.
- Understand that words of feeling, attitude and qualities may not have the same meaning when directly translated.
- If at any point, you feel the interpreter is not interpreting as you wish, let them know. This can be a simple solution to avoiding problems during the appointment.
- If you plan to talk about a controversial issue let the interpreter know. This then frees the interpreter of feeling uncomfortable and nervous
- Ask the client if you are not sure of his or her own relevant attitudes, perceptions or cultural traditions. If you need to obtain cultural information from the interpreter, ask your clients' permission in advance. The interpreter should also explain the nature of the conversation to the client while they answer your questions.

Do

- Appreciate that interpreters may not know all terminology needed for all fields of work.
- Repeat and summarise the major points of the meeting.
- Use diagrams, pictures and translated written materials to help increase understanding.
- Clarify that you have been understood or that you have understood your client.
- Be specific (e.g. 'daily' rather than 'frequent').

Do not

- (It is advisable) not to introduce humour during an appointment, it does not always translate well.
- Do not rush an appointment; interpreting is a pressurised and mentally exhausting profession. It requires time to accurately translate information.
- Do not leave the interpreter to explain information that the client does not understand, it is not the interpreters responsibility and can lead to misinterpretation. Nor should they answer a question on your behalf.
- Do not use metaphors, colloquialisms and idioms because such phrases are unlikely to have a direct translation or be misleading.

[Finishing the appointment](#)

- Check that the client has understood the key aims of the appointment. Ask if they have any questions.
- If the client requires a follow up appointment, arrange this whilst the interpreter is still present.
- Thank the client for attending and explain that you may need to have a post-appointment discussion with the interpreter. This is to avoid any unrest on the



client's behalf that a discussion is happening without them. Otherwise this could affect your relationship with your client.

- Debrief the interpreter: ask if the appointment was emotionally taxing and clarify any questions you have from the appointment.
- You **must complete the interpreter's job sheet** to ensure payment of the interpreter and accuracy of the invoice.

Additional resources available through DA Link client portal:

- A client/patient Satisfaction Survey in different written languages
- The benefits of face-to-face and telephone interpreting
- Language Identifier Tool - This can be used with your clients to determine which language they speak
- Anonymous feedback can be left regarding the interpreter's performance

We hope that this guide will be useful to you and your colleagues. However, if you do have any further queries regarding interpreting services, please do not hesitate to contact us using one of the methods below. Please note that there are other guides available to you within the resources section of DA Link client portal. Please do feel free to distribute this guide to your colleagues.